

Equality Scheme for the Northern Ireland Authority for Utility Regulation (the Utility Regulator)

***Drawn up in accordance with Section 75 and Schedule 9 of the
Northern Ireland Act 1998***

***This document is available in a range of formats on request. Please
contact us with your requirements (see page 12 for contact details).***

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Approved by the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland on 25 July 2012

Foreword

Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 (the Act) requires public authorities, in carrying out their functions relating to Northern Ireland, to have due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity and regard to the desirability of promoting good relations across a range of categories outlined in the Act¹.

In our equality scheme we set out how the Utility Regulator proposes to fulfil the Section 75 statutory duties.

We will commit the necessary resources in terms of people, time and money to make sure that the Section 75 statutory duties are complied with and that the equality scheme is implemented effectively, and on time.

We commit to having effective internal arrangements in place for ensuring our compliance with the Section 75 statutory duties and for monitoring and reviewing our progresss.

We will further develop our programme of communication and training with the aim of ensuring that all our staff and board members are made fully aware of our equality scheme and understand the commitments and obligations within it. We will develop a programme of awareness raising for our consultees on the Section 75 statutory duties and the commitments in our equality scheme.

We, the Chairman and Chief Executive of the Utility Regulator, are fully committed to effectively fulfilling our Section 75 statutory duties across all our functions (including service provision, employment and procurement) through the effective implementation of our equality scheme.

We realise the important role that the community and voluntary sector and the general public have to play to ensure the Section 75 statutory duties are effectively implemented. Our equality scheme demonstrates how determined we are to ensure there are opportunities, for people affected by our work, to positively influence how we carry out our functions in line with our Section 75 statutory duties. It also offers the means whereby persons directly affected by what they consider to be a

¹ See section 1.1 of our Equality Scheme.

failure, on our part, to comply with our equality scheme, can make complaints.

On behalf of the Utility Regulator we are pleased to support and endorse this equality scheme which has been drawn up in accordance with Section 75 and Schedule 9 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 and Equality Commission guidelines.

Signed:

Peter Matthews
Chairman

Shane Lynch
Chief Executive

Date

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Please note: Foreword and Appendices 3 and 4 form part of this equality scheme.

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Chapter 1 Introduction

Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998

1.1 Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 (the Act) requires the Utility Regulator to comply with two statutory duties:

Section 75 (1)

In carrying out our functions relating to Northern Ireland we are required to have due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity between

- persons of different religious belief, political opinion, racial group, age, marital status or sexual orientation
- men and women generally
- persons with a disability and persons without
- persons with dependants and persons without.

Section 75 (2)

In addition, without prejudice to the obligations above, in carrying out our functions in relation to Northern Ireland we are required to have regard to the desirability of promoting good relations between persons of different religious belief, political opinion or racial group.

“Functions” include the “powers and duties” of a public authority². This includes our employment and procurement functions. Please see below under “Who we are and what we do” for a detailed explanation of our functions.

How we propose to fulfil the Section 75 duties in relation to the relevant functions of the Utility Regulator

1.2 Schedule 9 4. (1) of the Act requires the Utility Regulator as a designated public authority to set out in an equality scheme how we propose to fulfil the duties imposed by Section 75 in relation to its relevant functions. This equality scheme is intended to fulfil that statutory requirement. It is both a statement of our arrangements for fulfilling the Section 75 statutory duties and our plan for their implementation.

1.3 We are committed to the discharge of our Section 75 obligations in all parts of our organisation and we will commit the necessary available

² Section 98 (1) of the Northern Ireland Act 1998.

resources in terms of people, time and money to ensure that the Section 75 statutory duties are complied with and that our equality scheme can be implemented effectively.

Who we are and what we do

Our predecessor organisation was first established in 1992, following privatisation of the Northern Ireland electricity industry, and our role extended in 1996 to cover gas. From April 2007 we also became the economic and customer service regulator for Northern Ireland's water and sewerage industries.

We are a non-Ministerial government department. We are independent of Ministers, who determine the legislative and policy parameters within which we operate; our role is to implement that policy, as embedded in the various statutes that set out our objectives and functions.

Our board currently consists of a chairman and six other members, plus the Chief Executive. Board members are appointed by the Minister for Finance and Personnel in consultation with the Chairman.

The office currently employs approximately 70 staff, with an annual budget around £7m.

The Chief Executive heads the Utility Regulator's Senior Management Team. The SMT also currently includes: the Directors for Gas, Water, Electricity, Retail and Social, and Corporate Affairs. It meets weekly to review matters of common interest, and provides the collegiate leadership of the office.

In March 2009 we published our first five-year Corporate Strategy, and we also publish an annual Forward Work Programme. These documents together with further information about the Utility Regulator's work may be viewed at www.uregni.gov.uk.

The 2009-14 Corporate Strategy sets out for the first time the Utility Regulator's Mission, Vision and Values:

Our mission: Value and sustainability in energy and water

Our vision: We will make a difference for customers by listening, innovating and leading.

Our values:

Be a best practice regulator
Be a united team
Be collaborative and co-operative
Be professional
Listen and explain
Make a difference
Act with integrity

Electricity

The main statutory framework for our work in electricity is set out in the Electricity (Northern Ireland) Order 1992, the Energy (Northern Ireland) Order 2003 and the Electricity (Single Wholesale Market) (Northern Ireland) Order 2007. Our principal objective is to protect consumers' interests, wherever appropriate by promoting effective competition, and we have a series of further objectives relating to universal service, financeability, sustainability and vulnerable customers.

Northern Ireland has around 805,000 electricity consumers, with load split around 40% / 60% between domestic and non-domestic customers. This electricity is generated by three main power stations, plus a large number of smaller and renewable stations. Significant volumes are imported from Scotland through the 450MW Moyle interconnector, and there is a 500MW transmission line to the Republic of Ireland. Electricity generation on the island of Ireland is around 60% gas-fired, with peat, coal and wind also being significant fuels.

Northern Ireland belongs to the all-island Single Electricity Market (SEM). This is a regional market with fully integrated arrangements for regulation, scheduling, and dispatch, as well as a high level of harmonisation in system operation and network tariff arrangements. The SEM is regulated by the SEM Committee which is a statutory committee of the Board and comprises an independent member, a deputy independent member, three members currently from the Utility Regulator (each appointed by DETI) and three from the Irish Republic's Commission for Energy Regulation (CER).

Gas

Northern Ireland's gas infrastructure is still under construction. With power generation as anchor-load, transmission lines have been constructed from Belfast to the North-West, and from the border to the Belfast area.

There are around 120,000 gas customers in Northern Ireland. These are mostly in the Greater Belfast area, on the Phoenix network that has been under construction since 1996. In recent years 10 towns near the two main transmission lines have also seen the construction of gas distribution networks, by firmus.

The fragmentation of our gas industry is mirrored across the island. The regulators are now engaged in a programme of work to design common arrangements for gas (CAG). These should simplify system operation, strengthen supply security and provide a sound basis for future investments in gas infrastructure.

Water

Our Water Directorate was established on 1 April 2007 with the specific responsibility for the economic regulation of the water and sewerage industries in Northern Ireland. Our principal role is to protect the interests of consumers of water and sewerage services where appropriate by promoting effective competition.

Our duties with respect to water and sewerage are broadly in line with the role currently discharged by Ofwat in England and Wales. However, in the absence of domestic charging some 70% of revenue is provided by the NI Executive via the Department of Regional Development. To address issues such as the impact of any shortfall in public expenditure during a price control period, we have agreed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Department of Regional Development. The MoU seeks to maintain the rigour and efficiency challenge of the regulatory regime whilst recognizing public expenditure budgetary constraints.

Energy Retail Market Opening

Competition has long been at the heart of the EU, UK and Northern Ireland vision of energy markets. A range of steps at all three levels have sought to promote wholesale and retail energy market competition. As regards the energy retail sector in Northern Ireland, the statutory remit given to us places a high value on competition as a means to deliver consumer benefits.

The Retail directorate was established in early 2009 with the aim of eradicating a number of significant barriers that can potentially hinder market entry and competition. The Retail directorate has been specifically working with our electricity and gas directorates to promote

competition. The Retail Directorate has recently been expanded to cover social issues.

Other Work Streams

We hold concurrent competition law powers and are Northern Ireland's competition authority for the industries we regulate.

We are uniquely placed as the UK's only cross-utility regulator, and Northern Ireland's only non-ministerial government department. These facts create challenges and opportunities in equal measure which we are keen to address over the coming years.

We are also responsible for certain aspects of the Government's "green" agenda and work daily on administrative and monitoring aspects of Northern Ireland's Renewables Obligation (with assistance from Ofgem on an agency basis), via the issue of Renewables Obligation Certificates. In 1997/8 the Utility Regulator introduced the Northern Ireland Energy Efficiency Levy (EEL) Programme to implement energy efficiency schemes for domestic and non-domestic customers with the aim of reducing carbon emissions. However in 2002, as a result of a consultative process, it was decided that the majority of funding (80% of an annual fund of around £7.5m) would be targeted at helping to alleviate fuel poverty in the homes of vulnerable customers. The EEL has recently been re-formed and re-branded as the Northern Ireland Sustainable Energy Programme.

We publish a Social Action Plan which co-ordinates all the actions to be taken by the Utility Regulator to protect particular groups of customers which, under the Energy (NI) Order 2003, we have a statutory duty to give due regard to including: individuals who are disabled or chronically sick; individuals of pensionable age; individuals with low incomes and individuals residing in rural areas. The Social Action Plan also considers the needs of Section 75 groups and includes actions to promote equality of opportunity.

We have quasi-judicial powers to determine certain complaints, disputes and appeals.

Employment

It is our policy to recruit staff only where there is a genuine requirement and to select the best person for each vacancy on the basis of merit. We will ensure that all vacancies will be resourced in a consistent and professional manner and at all times will meet business and legislative requirements.

We are committed to a policy of treating all employees and candidates equally. No employee or potential employee shall be subject to discrimination or receive less favourable treatment or consideration during the recruitment and selection process on any of the equality grounds. Our commitment to equality of opportunity in employment statement reads:

‘The Utility Regulator is committed to providing equality of opportunity. It is our policy that all eligible persons shall have equal opportunity for employment and advancement in the organisation on the basis of their ability, qualifications and aptitude for the work. Everyone has a right to equality of opportunity and to a good and harmonious working environment and atmosphere in which all workers are encouraged to apply their diverse talents and in which no worker feels under threat or intimidated. This right is protected in many instances by legislation. It is our policy to provide employment equality to all, irrespective of:

- Gender, including gender reassignment
- Marital or civil partnership status
- Having or not having dependants
- Religious belief or political opinion
- Race (including colour, nationality, ethnic or national origins, being an Irish Traveller)
- Having or not having a Disability
- Sexual orientation
- Age’

The policy is based on delivering an effective and efficient process which meets business needs and which ensures all employees and potential employees are treated in a fair and equitable manner at each stage of the recruitment and selection process. This includes providing information and application forms in alternative formats as required and making reasonable adjustments for the interviewing process as necessary.

We are also committed to the principle of openness, accountability and transparency in dealing with employees and applicants at all stages of the recruitment and selection process. This includes the provision of comprehensive information about the vacancy, open and active communication about the selection processes to be adopted and the provision of comprehensive feedback to candidates.

Procurement

Our procurement guidelines are based on those of the Central Procurement Directorate of the Department of Finance and Personnel (DFP). In addition, we adhere to the principles set out in “Equality of Opportunity and Sustainable Development in Public Procurement” published jointly by the Equality Commission and DFP. We recognise that the primary objective of public procurement policy should be to achieve best value for money which includes ensuring that procurement must meet its requirements for equality of opportunity and sustainable development to be deemed good quality and fit for purpose.

Chapter 2 Our arrangements for assessing our compliance with the section 75 duties (Schedule 9 4. (2) (a))

2.1 Some of our arrangements for assessing our compliance with the Section 75 statutory duties are outlined in other relevant parts of this equality scheme. Consultation arrangements are in chapter 3; monitoring arrangements and Equality Impact Assessment arrangements are in chapter 4; publication of information is in chapter 6 and 9; and complaints arrangements are in chapter 8.

In addition we have the following arrangements in place for assessing our compliance:

Responsibilities and reporting

In order to inform this scheme, we have examined our existing functions to assess whether they impact on the promotion of equality of opportunity or the good relations duty.

We will proactively develop our promotion of good relations, recognising our statutory obligation.

2.2 We are committed to the fulfilment of our Section 75 obligations in all parts of our work.

2.3 Responsibility for the effective implementation of our equality scheme lies with the Chief Executive. The Chief Executive is operationally responsible for equality duties: the development, implementation, maintenance and review of the equality scheme in accordance with Section 75 and Schedule 9 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998, including any good practice or guidance that has been or may be issued by the Equality Commission. The Chief Executive is accountable to our Board.

2.4 If you have any questions or comments regarding our equality scheme, please contact in the first instance Ian Campbell at the address given below and we will respond to you as soon as possible:

Mr Ian Campbell
Head of Corporate Services
NI Authority for Utility Regulation
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14 Queen Street

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2.5 Objectives and targets relating to the statutory duties will be integrated into our strategic and operational business plans³. An Implementation Plan containing the objectives, targets and actions necessary to deliver the undertakings in the Scheme has been developed and will be included in our Forward Work Plan for 2011/2012. Our Statutory Duties have already been included in our FWP for 2011/2012. The FWP comprises a summary of all non routine actions planned by us during the year.

2.6 Employees' job descriptions and personal performance plans reflect their contributions to the discharge of the Section 75 statutory duties and implementation of the equality scheme, where relevant. The personal performance plans are subject to appraisal in the annual and mid-year performance review.

2.7 We prepare an annual report on the progress we have made on implementing the arrangements set out in this equality scheme to discharge our Section 75 statutory duties (Section 75 annual progress report).

The Section 75 annual progress report will be sent to the Equality Commission by 31 August each year and will follow any guidance on annual reporting issued by the Equality Commission.

Progress on the delivery of Section 75 statutory duties will also be included in our organisational annual report.

2.8 The latest Section 75 annual progress report is available on our website www.uregni.gov.uk or by contacting Ian Campbell (details in section 2.4)

2.9 We will liaise closely with the Equality Commission to ensure that progress on the implementation of our equality scheme is maintained.

³ See Appendix 4 'Timetable for measures proposed' and section 2.11 of this equality scheme.

Action plan/action measures

2.11 We have developed an action plan to promote equality of opportunity and good relations. This action plan is set out in Appendix 6 to this equality scheme.

2.12 The action measures that will make up our action plan will be relevant to our functions. They will be developed and prioritised on the basis of an audit of inequalities. The audit of inequalities will gather and analyse information across the Section 75 categories⁴ to identify the inequalities that exist for our service users and those affected by our policies⁵. The audit of inequalities is a living document that will be amended as continued evidence is gathered on newly identified inequalities.

2.13 Action measures will be specific, measurable, linked to achievable outcomes, realistic and time bound. Action measures will include performance indicators and timescales for their achievement.

2.14 We will develop any action plans for a period of between one and five years in order to align them, as far as possible, with our corporate and business planning cycles. Implementation of the action measures will be incorporated into our business planning process. The implementation of action measures will be monitored and reviewed at regular management meetings. Other business areas with a potential impact on equality issues, such as the Social Action Plan, will also be considered at this time.

We will ensure that implementation of the Section 75 duties is supported with necessary resourcing (in terms of people, time and finance) to ensure that the statutory duties are complied with. We will inform and train staff on the requirements of the statutory obligations and how they can be efficiently implemented

2.15 We will seek input from our stakeholders and consult on our action plan before we send it to the Equality Commission and thereafter when reviewing the plan as per 2.16 below. We are committed to consulting on matters relating to the statutory duties in accordance with the Equality Commission's guiding principles, as set out below in Section 3. The

⁴ See section 1.1 of this equality scheme for a list of these categories.

⁵ See section 4.1 of this equality scheme for a definition of policies.

organisation will choose methods that seem most appropriate in each case (see section 3 below for more detail).

2.16 We will monitor our progress on the delivery of our action measures annually and update the action plan as necessary to ensure that it remains effective and relevant to our functions and work.

2.17 We will inform the Commission of any changes or amendments to our action plan and will also include this information in our Section 75 annual progress report to the Commission. Our Section 75 annual progress report will incorporate information on progress we have made in implementing our action plans/action measures.

2.18 Once finalised, our action plan will be available on our website (www.uregni.gov.uk) or from

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If you require it in an alternative format please contact us on the details provided.

Chapter 3 **Our arrangements for consulting**

(Schedule 9 4. (2) (a)) - on matters to which a duty (S75 (1) or (2)) is likely to be relevant (including details of the persons to be consulted).

(Schedule 9 4. (2) (b)) on the likely impact of policies adopted or proposed to be adopted by us on the promotion of equality of opportunity.

3.1 We recognise the importance of consultation in all aspects of the implementation of our statutory equality duties. We will consult on our equality scheme, action measures, equality impact assessments and other matters relevant to the Section 75 statutory duties.

3.2 We are committed to carrying out consultation in accordance with the following principles (as contained in the Equality Commission's guidance '*Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 – A Guide for Public Authorities (April 2010)*')

3.2.1 All consultations will seek the views of those directly affected by the matter/policy, regulated utilities, the Equality Commission, representative groups of Section 75 categories, other public authorities, voluntary and community groups, our staff and recognised trade union (NIPSA) and such other groups who have a legitimate interest in the matter, whether or not they have a direct economic or personal interest.

Initially all consultees (see Appendix 3), as a matter of course, will be notified (by email or post) of the matter/policy being consulted upon to ensure they are aware of all consultations. Thereafter, to ensure the most effective use of our and our consultees' resources, we will take a targeted approach to consultation for those consultees that may have a particular interest in the matter/policy being consulted upon and to whom the matter/policy is of particular relevance. This may include for example regional or local consultations, sectoral or thematic consultation etc.

3.2.2 Consultation with all relevant stakeholders will begin as early as possible. We will engage with affected individuals and representative groups to identify how best to consult or engage with them. We will ask our consultees what their preferred consultation methods are and will give consideration to these. Methods of consultation could include:

- Face-to-face meetings
- Focus groups

- Written documents with the opportunity to comment in writing
- Questionnaires
- Information/notification by email with an opportunity to opt in/opt out of the consultation
- Internet discussions or
- Telephone consultations.

This list is not exhaustive and we may develop other additional methods of consultation more appropriate to key stakeholders and the matter being consulted upon.

3.2.3 We will consider the accessibility and format of every method of consultation we use in order to remove barriers to the consultation process. Specific consideration will be given as to how best to communicate with children and young people, people with disabilities (in particular people with learning disabilities) and minority ethnic communities. We take account of existing and developing good practice, including the Equality Commission's guidance *Let's Talk Let's Listen – Guidance for public authorities on consulting and involving children and young people (2008)*.

Information will be made available, on request, in alternative formats⁶, in a timely manner. Requests for alternative formats will be responded to usually within three (3) working days. We will ensure that such consultees have equal time to respond.

3.2.4 Specific training is provided to those facilitating consultations to ensure that they have the necessary skills to communicate effectively with consultees.

3.2.5 To ensure effective consultation with consultees⁷ on Section 75 matters, we will develop a programme of awareness raising on the Section 75 statutory duties and the commitments in our equality scheme. This awareness programme may include:

- issue of a Press Release when the Equality Scheme is approved by the Equality Commission;
- circulation of a link to the final Equality Scheme and Action Plan to all consultees within the one month of approval by the Equality Commission by email or post;

⁶ See Chapter 6 of our equality scheme for further information on alternative formats of information we provide.

⁷ Please see Appendix 3 for a list of our consultees.

- holding an annual Equality Forum Meeting with internal Staff Representative's Committee to discuss Section 75 matters;
- arranging pre-consultation meetings with Section 75 representative groups and stakeholders to discuss specific policies as required;

3.2.6 The consultation period normally lasts for a minimum of twelve weeks to allow adequate time for groups to consult amongst themselves as part of the process of forming a view. However, in exceptional circumstances when this timescale is not feasible (for example implementing EU Directives or UK wide legislation, technical regulatory matters, meeting Health and Safety requirements, addressing urgent public health matters or complying with Court judgements, we may shorten timescales to eight weeks or less before the policy is implemented. We may continue consultation thereafter and will review the policy as part of our monitoring commitments⁸.

Where, under these exceptional circumstances, we must implement a policy immediately, as it is beyond our control, we may consult after implementation of the policy, in order to ensure that any impacts of the policy are considered.

3.2.7 If a consultation exercise is to take place over a period when consultees are less able to respond, for example, over the summer or Christmas break, or if the policy under consideration is particularly complex, we will give consideration to the feasibility of allowing a longer period for the consultation.

3.2.8 We are conscious of the fact that affected individuals and representative groups may have different needs. We will take appropriate measures to ensure full participation in any meetings that are held. We will consider for example the time of day, the appropriateness of the venue, in particular whether it can be accessed by those with disabilities, how the meeting is to be conducted, the use of appropriate language, whether a signer and/or interpreter is necessary, and whether the provision of childcare and support for other carers is required.

3.2.9 We will include the following wording in all future consultations to ensure that opportunity is given for consultees to specifically focus on Section 75 issues.

⁸ Please see below at 4.27 to 4.31 for details on monitoring.

Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act places a duty on public authorities to have due regard to the need to promote equality of opportunity and regard to the desirability of promoting good relations between different categories.

Whilst every care has been taken in the drafting of this document to adhere to best practice in relation to Section 75, the Utility Regulator would very much value the input of its stakeholders and the communities with whom it endeavours to participate.

We aim to promote equality of opportunity between nine categories of persons, namely between persons of different religious belief, political opinion, racial group, age, marital status or sexual orientation; between men and women generally; between persons with a disability and persons without; and between persons with dependents and persons without.

As part of this consultation exercise we would like to determine whether any of the nine groups defined above are significantly affected, either positively or negatively, or does the policy under consideration create differential impacts between groups within each Section 75 category? Is this impact adverse or beneficial?

The Utility Regulator is keen to incorporate any recommendations received in this regard into its policy and will respond to contributors indicating what decisions it has made in respect of the consultation.

The consultation period is from XXXXX to XXXXX.

3.2.10 We make all relevant information available to consultees in appropriate formats to ensure meaningful consultation. This includes detailed information on the policy proposal being consulted upon and any relevant quantitative and qualitative data.

3.2.11 In making any decision with respect to a policy adopted or proposed to be adopted, we take into account any assessment and consultation carried out in relation to the policy.

3.2.12 We provide feedback to consultees in a timely manner. A feedback report is prepared which includes summary information on the policy consulted upon, a summary of consultees' comments and a summary of our consideration of and response to consultees' input. The feedback is provided in formats suitable to consultees. (Please see also 6.3)

3.3 A list of our consultees is included in this equality scheme at Appendix 3. It can also be obtained from our website at

www.uregni.gov.uk or by contacting

Mr Ian Campbell

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3.4 Our consultation list is not exhaustive and is reviewed on an annual basis to ensure it remains relevant to our functions and policies.

We welcome enquiries from any person/s or organisations wishing to be added to the list of consultees. Please contact Mr Ian Campbell (as above) to provide your contact details and have your areas of interest noted or have your name/details removed or amended. Please also inform us at this stage if you would like information sent to you in a particular format or language.

Chapter 4 **Our arrangements for assessing, monitoring and publishing the impact of policies**

(Schedule 9 4. (2) (b); Schedule 9 4. (2) (c); Schedule 9 4. (2) (d); Schedule 9 9. (1); Schedule 9 9.(2))

Our arrangements for assessing the likely impact of policies adopted or proposed to be adopted on the promotion of equality of opportunity (Schedule 9 4. (2) (b))

4.1 In the context of Section 75, ‘policy’ is very broadly defined and it covers all the ways in which we carry out, or propose to carry out, our functions in relation to Northern Ireland. In respect of this equality scheme, the term policy is used for any (proposed/amended/existing) strategy, policy initiative or practice and/or decision, whether written or unwritten and irrespective of the label given to it, eg, ‘draft’, ‘pilot’, ‘high level’ or ‘sectoral’.

4.2 In making any decision with respect to a policy adopted or proposed to be adopted, we take into account any assessment and consultation carried out in relation to the policy, as required by Schedule 9 9. (2) of the Northern Ireland Act 1998.

4.3 We use the tools of **screening** and **equality impact assessment** to assess the likely impact of a policy on the promotion of equality of opportunity and good relations. In carrying out these assessments we will relate them to the intended outcomes of the policy in question and will also follow Equality Commission guidance:

- the guidance on screening, including the screening template, as detailed in the Commission’s guidance ‘*Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 – A Guide for Public Authorities (April 2010)*’ and
- on undertaking an equality impact assessment as detailed in the Commission’s guidance ‘*Practical guidance on equality impact assessment (February 2005)*’.

Screening

4.4 The purpose of screening is to identify those policies that are likely to have an impact on equality of opportunity and/or good relations as per paragraph 3.2.9.

4.5 Screening is completed at the earliest opportunity in the policy development/review process. Policies which we propose to adopt will be subject to screening prior to implementation.

4.6 The lead role in the screening of a policy is taken by the policy decision maker who has the authority to make changes to that policy. However, screening will also involve other relevant team members, for example, Human Resources or other Corporate Affairs colleagues, those who implement the policy and staff members from other relevant work areas. Where appropriate we will include key stakeholders in the screening process.

4.7 The following questions are applied to all our policies as part of the screening process:

- What is the likely impact on equality of opportunity for those affected by this policy, for each of the Section 75 equality categories? (minor/major/none)
- Are there opportunities to better promote equality of opportunity for people within the Section 75 equality categories?
- To what extent is the policy likely to impact on good relations between people of a different religious belief, political opinion or racial group? (minor/major/none)
- Are there opportunities to better promote good relations between people of a different religious belief, political opinion or racial group?

4.8 In order to answer the screening questions, we gather as much relevant information and data, both qualitative and quantitative, as possible. In taking this evidence into account we consider the different needs, experiences and priorities for each of the Section 75 equality categories. Any screening decision will be informed by this evidence.

4.9 Completion of screening, taking into account our consideration of the answers to all four screening questions set out in 4.7 above, will lead to one of the following three outcomes:

1. the policy has been 'screened in' for equality impact assessment

2. the policy has been ‘screened out’ with mitigation⁹ or an alternative policy proposed to be adopted
3. the policy has been ‘screened out’ without mitigation or an alternative policy proposed to be adopted.

4.10 If our screening concludes that the likely impact of a policy is ‘minor’ in respect of one, or more, of the equality of opportunity and/or good relations categories, we may on occasion decide to proceed with an equality impact assessment, depending on the policy. If an EQIA is not to be conducted we will nonetheless consider measures that might mitigate the policy impact as well as alternative policies that might better achieve the promotion of equality of opportunity and/or good relations.

Where we mitigate we will outline in our screening template the reasons to support this decision together with the proposed changes, amendments or alternative policy.

This screening decision will be ‘signed off’ by the appropriate policy lead within The Utility Regulator.

4.11 If our screening concludes that the likely impact of a policy is ‘major’ in respect of one, or more, of the equality of opportunity and/or good relations categories, we will normally subject the policy to an equality impact assessment. This screening decision will be ‘signed off’ by the appropriate policy lead within the Utility Regulator.

4.12 If our screening concludes that the likely impact of a policy is ‘none’, in respect of all of the equality of opportunity and/or good relations categories, we may decide to screen the policy out. If a policy is ‘screened out’ as having no relevance to equality of opportunity or good relations, we will give details of the reasons for the decision taken. This screening decision will be ‘signed off’ by the appropriate policy lead within the Utility Regulator.

4.13 As soon as possible following the completion of the screening process, the screening template, signed off and approved by the senior manager responsible for the policy, will be made available on our website, www.uregni.gov.uk and on request from
Mr Ian Campbell
Head of Corporate Services

⁹ Mitigation – Where an assessment (screening in this case) reveals that a particular policy has an adverse impact on equality of opportunity and / or good relations, a public authority must consider ways of delivering the policy outcomes which have a less adverse effect on the relevant Section 75 categories.

NI Authority for Utility Regulation
Queens House
14 Queen Street
Belfast BT1 6ED
Tel: 028 9031 1575
Email: ian.campbell@uregni.gov.uk
Fax: 028 9031 1740
SMS: 07794 965909

4.14 If a consultee, including the Equality Commission, raises a concern about a screening decision based on supporting evidence, we will review the screening decision.

4.15 Our screening reports are published quarterly [see below at 4.20 - 4.22 and 4.23 for details].

Equality impact assessment

4.16 An EQIA is a thorough and systematic analysis of a policy, whether that policy is formal or informal, and irrespective of the scope of that policy. The primary function of an EQIA is to determine the extent of any impact of a policy upon the Section 75 categories and to determine if the impact is an adverse one. It is also an opportunity to demonstrate the likely positive outcomes of a policy and to seek ways to more effectively promote equality of opportunity and good relations.

Over the life of this scheme we will carry out EQIAs on those policy areas where the initial screening indicates that there is evidence of impact on the equality of opportunity or good relations duty within the terms of Section 75 of the Act. Where appropriate, a number of policies within a function may be grouped together for one assessment.

4.17 Once a policy is screened and screening has identified that an equality impact assessment is necessary, we will carry out the EQIA in accordance with Equality Commission guidance. The EQIA will be carried out as part of the policy development process, before the policy is implemented.

4.18 Any EQIA will be subject to consultation at the appropriate stage(s). Organisations included in the list in Appendix 3 will be consulted on our equality impact assessments. This list is not exhaustive. Additional bodies may be added during the lifetime of this scheme to reflect the establishment of new organisations. If other organisations wish to be

added to this list they should contact the address on the front page of this scheme. (For further detail see above Chapter 3 “Our Arrangements for Consulting”).

Our arrangements for publishing the results of the assessments of the likely impact of policies we have adopted or propose to adopt on the promotion of equality of opportunity
(Schedule 9 4. (2) (d); Schedule 9 9. (1))

4.19 We make publicly available the results of our assessments (screening and EQIA) of the likely impact of our policies on the promotion of equality of opportunity and good relations.

What we publish

4.20 Screening reports

These are published quarterly. Screening reports detail:

- All policies screened by the Utility Regulator over the three month period
- A statement of the aim(s) of the policy/policies to which the assessment relates
- Consideration given to measures which might mitigate any adverse impact
- Consideration given to alternative policies which might better achieve the promotion of equality of opportunity;
- Screening decisions, i.e:
 - whether the policy has been ‘screened in’ for equality impact assessment.
 - whether the policy has been ‘screened out’ with mitigation or an alternative policy proposed to be adopted.
 - whether the policy has been ‘screened out’ without mitigation or an alternative policy proposed to be adopted.
- Where applicable, a timetable for conducting equality impact assessments
- A link to the completed screening template(s) on our website

4.21 Screening templates

For details on the availability of our screening templates please refer to 4.13.

4.22 Equality impact assessments

EQIA reports are published once the impact assessment has been completed. These reports include:

- A statement of the aim of the policy assessed
- Information and data collected
- Details of the assessment of impact(s)
- Consideration given to measures which might mitigate any adverse impact
- Consideration given to alternative policies which might better achieve the promotion of equality of opportunity
- Consultation responses
- The decision taken
- Future monitoring plans.

How we publish the information

4.23 All information we publish is accessible and can be made available in alternative formats on request. Please see 6.3 below.

Where we publish the information

4.24 The results of our assessments (screening reports and completed templates, the results of equality impact assessments) are available on our website www.uregni.gov.uk or by contacting

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Head of Corporate Services
NI Authority for Utility Regulation
Queens House
14 Queen Street
Belfast BT1 6ED
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Email: ian.campbell@uregni.gov.uk
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SMS: 07794 965909

4.25 In addition to the above, screening reports (electronic link or hard copy on request if more suitable for recipients) which include all policies screened over a 3 month period are also sent directly to all consultees on a quarterly basis (where policies have been screened in that quarter).

4.26 We will inform the general public about the availability of this material through communications such as press releases where appropriate.

Our arrangements for monitoring any adverse impact of policies we have adopted on equality of opportunity
(Schedule 9 4. (2) (c))

4.27 Monitoring can assist us to deliver better public services and continuous improvements. Monitoring Section 75 information involves the processing of sensitive personal data (data relating to the racial or ethnic origin of individuals, sexual orientation, political opinion, religious belief, etc). In order to carry out monitoring in a manner appropriate to the sensitivities of the data, we follow guidance from the Office of the Information Commissioner and the Equality Commission.

4.28 We monitor any adverse impact on the promotion of equality of opportunity of policies we have adopted. We are also committed to monitoring more broadly to identify opportunities to better promote equality of opportunity and good relations in line with Equality Commission guidance.

4.29 Systems established to monitor the impact of policies and identify opportunities to better promote equality of opportunity and good relations are:

- The collection, collation and analysis of existing relevant primary quantitative and qualitative data across all nine equality categories on an ongoing basis
- The collection, collation and analysis of existing relevant secondary sources of quantitative and qualitative data across all nine equality categories on an ongoing basis
- An audit of existing information systems within one year of approval of this equality scheme, to identify the extent of current monitoring and take action to address any gaps in order to have the necessary information on which to base decisions
- Undertaking or commissioning new data if necessary.

4.30 If over a two year period monitoring and evaluation show that a policy results in greater adverse impact than predicted, or if

opportunities arise which would allow for greater equality of opportunity to be promoted, we will ensure that the policy is revised to achieve better outcomes for relevant equality groups.

4.31 We review our EQIA monitoring information on an annual basis. Other monitoring information is also reviewed annually.

Our arrangements for publishing the results of our monitoring
(Schedule 9 4. (2) (d))

4.32 Schedule 9 4. (2) (d) requires us to publish the results of the monitoring of adverse impacts of policies we have adopted. However, we are committed to monitoring more broadly and the results of our policy monitoring are published as follows:

4.33 EQIA monitoring information is published as part of our Section 75 annual progress report [see 2.7]

4.34 Results of our monitoring is also published on our website and through emails to consultees.

4.35 All information published is accessible and can be made available in alternative formats on request. Please see below at 6.3 for details.

Chapter 5 Staff training

(Schedule 9 4.(2) (e))

Commitment to staff training

5.1 We recognise that awareness raising and training play a crucial role in the effective implementation of our Section 75 duties.

5.2 Our Chief Executive wishes to positively communicate the commitment of the Utility Regulator to the Section 75 statutory duties, both internally and externally.

To this end we maintain a communication and training programme for all staff and will ensure that our commitment to the Section 75 statutory duties is made clear in all relevant publications.

Training objectives

5.3 We have an ongoing training plan for our staff which aims to achieve the following objectives:

- to raise awareness of the provisions of Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998, our equality scheme commitments and the particular issues likely to affect people across the range of Section 75 categories, to ensure that our staff fully understand their role in implementing the scheme
- to provide those staff involved in the assessment of policies (screening and EQIA) with the necessary skills and knowledge to do this work effectively
- to provide those staff who deal with complaints in relation to compliance with our equality scheme with the necessary skills and knowledge to investigate and monitor complaints effectively
- to provide those staff involved in consultation processes with the necessary skills and knowledge to do this work effectively
- to provide those staff involved in the implementation and monitoring of the effective implementation of the Utility Regulator equality scheme with the necessary skills and knowledge to do this work effectively.

Awareness raising and training arrangements

5.4 The following arrangements are in place to ensure all our staff and board members are aware of and understand our equality obligations.

- We will develop a summary of this equality scheme and make it available to all staff.
- We will provide access to copies of the full equality scheme for all staff; ensure that any queries or questions of clarification from staff are addressed effectively.
- Our Staff will receive a briefing on this equality scheme within three (3) months after approval of scheme.
- The Section 75 statutory duties form part of induction training for new staff.
- Focused training is provided for our key staff who are directly engaged in taking forward the implementation of our equality scheme commitments (for example those involved in research and data collection, policy development, service design, conducting equality impact assessments, consultation, monitoring and evaluation).
- Where appropriate, training will be provided to ensure staff are aware of the issues experienced by the range of Section 75 groups.
- When appropriate and on an ongoing basis, arrangements will be made to ensure staff are kept up to date with Section 75 developments.

5.5 Training and awareness raising programmes will, where relevant, be developed in association with the appropriate Section 75 groups and our staff.

In order to share resources and expertise, we will, where possible, work closely with other bodies and agencies in the development and delivery of training.

Monitoring and evaluation

5.6 Our training programme is subject to the following monitoring and evaluation arrangements:

- We evaluate the extent to which all participants in this training programme have acquired the necessary skills and knowledge to achieve each of the above objectives.

- The extent to which training objectives have been met will be reported on as part of the Section 75 annual progress report, which will be sent to the Equality Commission.

Chapter 6 Our arrangements for ensuring and assessing public access to information and services we provide

(Schedule 9 4. (2) (f))

6.1 We are committed to ensuring that the information we disseminate and the services we provide are fully accessible to all parts of the community in Northern Ireland. We keep our arrangements under review to ensure that this remains the case.

6.2 We are aware that some groups will not have the same access to information as others.

In particular:

- People with sensory, learning, communication and mobility disabilities may require printed information in other formats.
- Members of ethnic minority groups, whose first language is not English, may have difficulties with information provided only in English.
- Children and young people may not be able to fully access or understand information.

Access to information

6.3 To ensure equality of opportunity in accessing information, we provide information in alternative formats on request, where reasonably practicable. Where the exact request cannot be met we will ensure a reasonable alternative is provided.

We, through the consultation process will liaise with representatives of young people and disability and minority ethnic organisations and takes account of existing and developing good practice.

We will respond to requests for information in alternative formats in a timely manner, usually within three (3) working days.

6.4 In disseminating information through the media we will seek to advertise in the press where appropriate.

Access to services

6.6 We are committed to ensuring that all of our services are fully accessible to everyone in the community across the Section 75 categories.

We also adhere to the relevant provisions of current anti-discrimination legislation.

Assessing public access to information and services

6.7 We monitor quarterly across all our functions, in relation to access to information and services, to ensure equality of opportunity and good relations are promoted.

6.8 Monitoring will be undertaken of all requests for information in alternative formats along with time taken and ability to meet these requests.

Chapter 7 Timetable for measures we propose in this equality scheme

(Schedule 9 4. (3) (b))

7.1 Appendix 4 outlines our timetable for all measures proposed within this equality scheme. The measures outlined in this timetable will be incorporated into our business planning processes.

7.2 This timetable is different from and in addition to our commitment to developing action plans/action measures to specifically address inequalities and further promote equality of opportunity and good relations. We have included in our equality scheme a commitment to develop an action plan. Accordingly, this commitment it is listed in the timetable of measures at Appendix 4. For information on these action measures please see above at 2.11 – 2.18.

Chapter 8 Our complaints procedure (Schedule 9 10.)

8.1 We are responsive to the views of members of the public. We will endeavour to resolve all complaints made to us in respect of our Equality Scheme.

8.2 Schedule 9 paragraph 10 of the Act refers to complaints. A person can make a complaint to a public authority if the complainant believes he or she may have been directly affected by an alleged failure of the authority to comply with its approved equality scheme.

If the complaint has not been resolved within a reasonable timescale, the complaint can be brought to the Equality Commission.

8.3 A person wishing to make a complaint that we have failed to comply with our approved equality scheme should contact

Mr Ian Campbell
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NI Authority for Utility Regulation
Queens House
14 Queen Street
Belfast BT1 6ED
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8.4 We will in the first instance acknowledge receipt of each complaint within three days.

8.5 We will carry out an internal investigation of the complaint and will respond substantively to the complainant within one (1) month of the date of receiving the letter of complaint. Under certain circumstances, if the complexity of the matter requires a longer period, the period for response to the complainant may be extended to two (2) months. In those circumstances, the complainant will be advised of the extended period within one month of making the complaint.

8.6 During this process the complainant will be kept fully informed of the progress of the investigation into the complaint and of any outcomes.

8.7 In any subsequent investigation by the Equality Commission, we will co-operate fully, providing access in a timely manner to any relevant documentation that the Equality Commission may require.

Similarly, we will co-operate fully with any investigation by the Equality Commission under sub-paragraph 11 (1) (b) of Schedule 9 to the Northern Ireland Act 1998.

8.8 We will make all efforts to implement promptly and in full any recommendations arising out of any Equality Commission investigation.

Chapter 9 Publication of our equality scheme

(Schedule 9 4. (3) (c))

9.1 Our equality scheme is available free of charge in print form and alternative formats from:

Mr Ian Campbell
Head of Corporate Services
NI Authority for Utility Regulation
Queens House
14 Queen Street
Belfast BT1 6ED
Tel: 028 9031 1575
Email: ian.campbell@uregni.gov.uk
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SMS: 07794 965909

9.2 Our equality scheme is also available on our website at www.uregni.gov.uk

9.3 The following arrangements are in place for the publication in a timely manner of our equality scheme to ensure equality of access:

- We will make every effort to communicate widely the existence and content of our equality scheme. This may include press releases, prominent advertisements in the press, the internet and direct mail shots to groups representing the various categories in Section 75.
- We will email a link to our approved equality scheme to our consultees on our consultation lists. Other consultees without e-mail will be notified by letter that the scheme is available on request. We will respond to requests for the equality scheme in alternative formats in a timely manner, usually within three (3) working days.
- Our equality scheme is available on request in alternative formats and in minority languages to meet the needs of those not fluent in English.
- We will liaise with representative groups and experts in response to specific requests for special communication of the scheme to children and young people and people with disabilities

9.4 For a list of our stakeholders and consultees please see Appendix 3 of the equality scheme, visit our website at www.uregni.gov.uk or contact

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Chapter 10 Review of our equality scheme

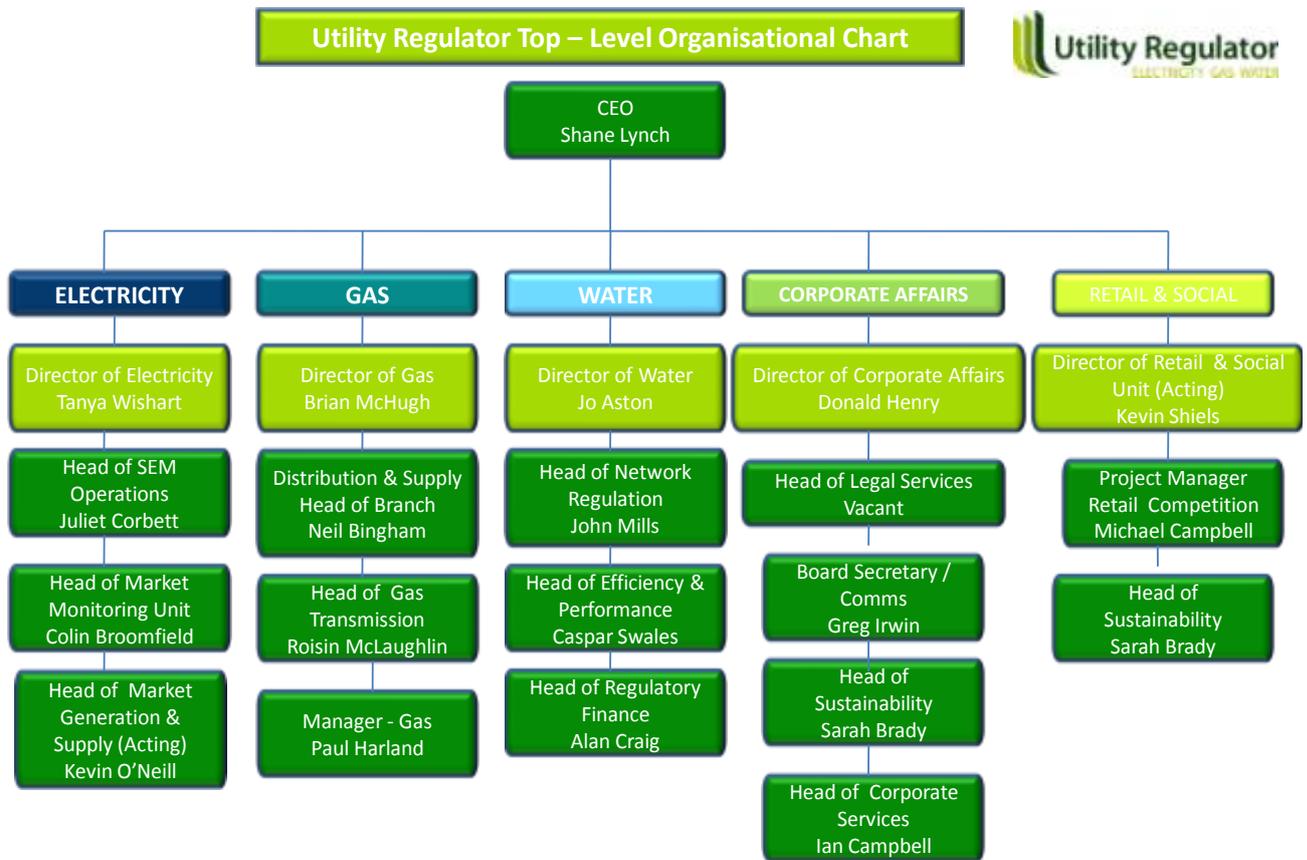
(Schedule 9 8. (3))

10.1 As required by Schedule 9 paragraph 8 (3) of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 we will conduct a thorough review of this equality scheme. This review will take place either within five years of submission of this equality scheme to the Equality Commission or within a shorter timescale to allow alignment with the review of other planning cycles.

The review will evaluate the effectiveness of our scheme in relation to the implementation of the Section 75 statutory duties relevant to our functions in Northern Ireland.

10.2 In undertaking this review we will follow any guidance issued by the Equality Commission. A report of this review will be made public on our website (www.uregni.gov.uk) and sent to the Equality Commission.

Appendix 1 Organisational chart



Appendix 2 Example groups relevant to the Section 75 categories for Northern Ireland purposes

Please note, this list is for illustration purposes only, it is not exhaustive.

Category	Example groups
Religious belief	Buddhist; Catholic; Hindu; Jewish; Muslims, people of no religious belief; Protestants; Sikh; other faiths. For the purposes of Section 75, the term “religious belief” is the same definition as that used in the <i>Fair Employment & Treatment (NI) Order</i> ¹⁰ . Therefore, “religious belief” also includes any <i>perceived</i> religious belief (or perceived lack of belief) and, in employment situations only, it also covers any “ <i>similar philosophical belief</i> ”.
Political opinion ¹¹	Nationalist generally; Unionists generally; members/supporters of other political parties.
Racial group	Black people; Chinese; Indians; Pakistanis; people of mixed ethnic background; Polish; Roma; Travellers; White people.
Men and women generally	Men (including boys); Trans-gendered people; Transsexual people; women (including girls).
Marital status	Civil partners or people in civil partnerships; divorced people; married people; separated people; single people; widowed people, people living with partners.
Age	Children and young people; older people.
Persons with a disability	Persons with disabilities as defined by the Disability Discrimination Act 1995.
Persons with dependants	Persons with personal responsibility for the care of a child; for the care of a person with a disability; or the care of a dependant older person.
Sexual orientation	Bisexual people; heterosexual people; gay or lesbian people.

¹⁰ See Section 98 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998, which states: “*In this Act...“political opinion” and “religious belief” shall be construed in accordance with Article 2(3) and (4) of the Fair Employment & Treatment (NI) Order 1998.*”

¹¹ *ibid*

Appendix 3 List of consultees

(Schedule 9 4. (2) (a))

Action Renewables
Advice NI
AES Kilroot
Age Concern NI
Age Sector Platform
Agenda NI
Airtricity
Airtricity Energy Supply Ltd
Mr Alan Rainey
Alliance Party
Antrim Borough Council
Ards Borough Council
Armagh City and District Council
Ballymena Borough Council
Ballymoney Borough Council
Banbridge District Council
Belfast City Council
Belfast Healthy Ageing Strategic Partnership
Belfast Healthy Cities
Mr Bill Cargo
Bord Gais Eireann
Bryson House
Business in the Community
Cara-friend
Carer's UK
Carrickfergus Borough Council
Castlereagh Borough Council
Confederation of British Industry
Centrica
Chief Executive's Forum
Chief Officers of Voluntary Organisations
Chinese Welfare Association
Mr Chris Le Fevre
Citizen's Advice Bureau
Dr Clive Elphick
Coleraine Borough Council
Commission for Energy Regulation
Committee for Social Development
Community Relations Council
Consumer Advice (Belfast City Council)

The Consumer Council for NI
Consumer Credit Counselling Service
Cookstown District Council
Coolkeeragh Power Ltd
Coalition on Sexual Orientation
Craigavon Borough Council
Deaf Association NI
Department for Regional Development
Department for Social Development
Department for Social Development, Housing Division
Department of Agriculture and Regional Development
Department of Culture, Arts and Leisure
Department of Education
Department of Enterprise, Trade and Development
Department of Finance and Personnel
Department of the Environment
Department of Employment and Learning
Derry City Council
Disability Action
Mr Dominic Maclaine
Mr Douglas McIlldoon
Dove House
Down District Council
Dungannon and South Tyrone Borough Council
DUP
Eaga Partnership
East Belfast Community Development Agency
Economic and Social Research Institute
Economic Research Institute NI
Eirgrid
Electricity Supply Board
Electricity Supply Board, Customer Supply
Energia
Energy Savings Trust
Equality Commission for NI
ESB Independent Energy
Ms Etain Doyle
Federation of Small Businesses
Fermanagh District Council
firmus energy
Friends of the Earth NI
Gingerbread NI
Green Party

Health and Social Care NI
Help the Aged
Indian Community Centre
Institute of Energy (NI)
Institute of Directors NI
Institute of Public Health
Irish League of Credit Unions
Investing for Health Partnership
Mr Jim Oatridge
Larne Borough Council
Law Centre
Lendrum's Bridge Wind Farm Ltd
Lesbian Advocacy Service
Limavady Borough Council
Limavady Community Development Initiative
Lisburn City Council
Lowlands Health and Energy
Macmillan Cancer Support
Magherafelt District Council
Mencap
Moyle District Council
Multi-Cultural Resource Centre
Mutual Energy
National Energy Action NI
National Insulation Association
Newry and Mourne District Council
Newtownabbey Borough Council
NI Anti-Poverty Network
NI Association for Mental Health
NI Chamber of Commerce and Industry
NI Commissioner for Children and Young People
NI Council for Ethnic Minorities
NI Dyslexia Association
NI Energy Agency
NI Federation of Housing Associations
NI Gay Rights Association
NI Housing Council
NI Housing Executive
NI Human Rights Commission
NI Oil Federation
NI Women's European Platform
NIC / ICTU
NICVA

NIE
NIE Energy
NI Water
North Belfast Partnership
North Down Borough Council
Northern Health and Social Services Board
Northern Investing for Health Partnership
Northern Ireland Environment Link
Npower
Ofgem
OFMDFM
Older People's Advocate NI
Omagh Borough Council
Omagh Community House
Omagh Independent Advice Services
Mr Patrick Waterfield
Prof Peter Matthews
Mr Philip Johnson
Phoenix Natural Gas
Phoenix Supply NI
Power and Gas Ventures
Premier Power Ltd
Premier-Transmission
PUP
Public Health Agency
Queens Student Union
Quinn Energy Supply
Regent Electricity
Mr Richard Rodgers
RNIB NI
RNID
Rural Community Network
Rural Development Council
Save the Children
Scottish and Southern Energy plc
Scottish Power
SDLP
Shelter NI
Sinn Fein
Strabane District Council
Tada Rural Support Network
The Innovation Centre
Tradelink Solutions

TUV
Ulster Farmer's Union
Ulster Federation of Credit Unions
University of Ulster
UUP
Western Health Action Zone

Appendix 4 Timetable for measures proposed (Schedule 9 4.(3) (b))

Measure	Lead responsibility	Timetable
<i>Section 75 Annual Progress Report [2.7]</i>	<i>HR Manager / Chief Executive</i>	<i>31 August (annually)</i>
<i>Action plan</i>		
<i>Consultation on draft action plan [2.15]</i>	<i>Head of Corporate Services</i>	<i>[in line with consultation on equality scheme]</i>
<i>Finalised action plan published [2.18]</i>	<i>HR Manager / Chief Executive</i>	<i>December 2011</i>
<i>Arrangements for monitoring progress in place [2.16]</i>	<i>HR Manager</i>	<i>April 2011</i>
<i>Consultation list reviewed and updated [3.4]</i>	<i>HR Manager</i>	<i>September (annually)</i>
<i>Screening timetable [4.4]</i>	<i>Policy Lead</i>	<i>According to policy development timetable</i>
<i>Screening Reports [4.15]</i>	<i>HR Manager</i>	<i>July (and quarterly thereafter)</i>
<i>EQIA timetable [4.16]</i>	<i>Policy Lead</i>	<i>According to policy development timetable</i>
<i>Monitoring</i>		
<i>Review of monitoring information [4.31]</i>	<i>Head of Corporate Services</i>	<i>April 2012 (and then annually)</i>
<i>Publication of monitoring information [4.33;4.34]</i>	<i>HR Manager</i>	<i>September (annually)</i>
<i>Training</i>		
<i>Development of summary scheme[5.4]</i>	<i>HR Manager</i>	<i>Within three (3) months of approval by ECNI</i>

<i>Development of overall training programme [5.5]</i>	<i>HR Manager</i>	<i>September (annually)</i>
<i>Focussed training [5.4]</i>	<i>HR Manager</i>	<i>Within three (3) months of approval by ECNI</i>
<i>Update training [5.4]</i>	<i>HR Manager</i>	<i>As required (at least annually)</i>
<i>Evaluation of training [5.6]</i>	<i>HR Manager</i>	<i>August (annually)</i>
<i>Assessing access to information and services [6.7]</i>	<i>HR Manager</i>	<i>August (annually)</i>
<i>Communication of equality scheme [9.3]</i>	<i>Head of Corporate Services</i>	<i>Within one month of approval by ECNI</i>
<i>Notification of consultees [9.3]</i>	<i>Head of Corporate Services</i>	<i>Within one month of approval by ECNI</i>
<i>Review of equality scheme [10.1]</i>	<i>HR Manager / Chief Executive</i>	<i>2014</i>

Appendix 5 Glossary of terms

ACER = Agency for the Co-operation of Energy Regulators

CAG = Common Arrangements for Gas

CPM = Capacity Payment Mechanism

FWP = Forward Work Plan

GSS = Guaranteed Service Standards

SAP = Social Action Plan

SEM = Single Electricity Market

The Third Package (also known as IME3) is a new European framework for competition in the energy sector to be achieved through consumer choice, fairer prices, cleaner energy and security of supply.

Appendix 6 Action plan/action measures

An Audit of Inequalities undertaken in Autumn 2010 has highlighted the main themes we will concentrate on over the life of this Scheme to be Age, Disability and Communication (access to information).

The Corporate Strategy, Forward Work Plan and Social Action Plan are established plans which have been consulted upon extensively with the people and organisations listed in Appendix 3.

The areas identified for inclusion in the Action Plan are:

- Protecting consumers by ensuring utility monopolies act efficiently (Age and Disability themes);
- Environmental sustainability and security of supply (Age and Disability themes);
- Protecting vulnerable consumers (Age, Disability and Communication themes);
- Boosting competition in wholesale and retail markets (Age, Disability and Communication themes);
- Harmonising energy markets and use of infrastructure (Age, Disability and Communication themes);
- Evolving our regulatory framework (Age, Disability and Communication themes);
- Utility Regulator organisational performance and development (Communication theme).

Action	How	Responsibility	When
Protection of consumers through effective regulation of monopoly utility companies by applying our regulatory scrutiny to drive efficiencies and promote enhanced level of services	Embedding of equality considerations into the development of Price Controls, Guaranteed Service Standards (GSS) and Tariff Reviews	Gas, Electricity and Water directorates	2011/12 and ongoing
The promotion of sustainability and security of	Implementation of Fuel Security Code requirements in Northern Ireland;	Gas, Electricity, Water and Retail directorates	2011/12 and ongoing

supply through working with utility companies to take account of the environmental impact of the services they provide	Implementation arrangements for all island security of supply; Monitoring and, where necessary, reviewing the NI Sustainable Energy Programme; Implementation of changes arising from the Renewable Energy Directive		
Protecting vulnerable customers by implementing initiatives emanating from our Social Action Plan	Undertake research into the optimal content and format of customers bills; Ensure Third Package requirements in this area are implemented; Produce and implement a debt code of practice for energy suppliers; Devise, populate and distribute a Third Package required Consumer Checklist; Develop Smart Metering to include a trial for customers vulnerable to the effects of fuel poverty and an interim report	Gas, Electricity, Water and Retail directorates	2011/12 and ongoing
Further advancement of retail and wholesale competition to promote the interests of consumers	Implementation of Third Package policies to ensure customers have clarity in their choice of energy supplier; Implementation long term electricity switching processes to enhance competition;	Gas, Electricity, Water and Retail directorates	2011/12 and ongoing

	Ensure all necessary preparations are achieved to manage new supplier entry and ensure customer protection		
Harmonization arrangements to deliver benefits for Northern Ireland consumers	Finalising business rules of Common Arrangements for Gas Code on the island of Ireland; Implementation of review processes for the Capacity Payment Mechanism (CPM) Medium Term Review; Progressing ongoing issues via the Harmonisation Working Group and Harmonisation Steering Group; Monitoring and investigating the Single Electricity Market (SEM) to mitigate the potential abuse of market power and enforcing the bidding Code of Practice	Gas, Electricity, Water and Retail directorates	2011/12 and ongoing
Greater focus on the wider European legislative context, ensuring that we – in conjunction with statutory partners – expeditiously implement relevant legislation and effectively represent the views of Northern Ireland consumers	Ensure appropriate access to the Agency for the Co-operation of Energy Regulators (ACER) and input into European energy policy including network codes as they are drafted; Implementation of all relevant aspects of Energy Bill; Produce a paper on Financing Networks; Implementation of IME 3 (Third	Gas, Electricity and Retail directorates	2011/12 and ongoing

	Energy Package)		
Continuing to develop as an organisation	Carry out a mid-term review of our Corporate Strategy 2009-14	Corporate Affairs and CEO Office	2011/12