

# Report on Northern Powergrid's (NPg) Independent Stakeholder Group (ISG) meeting

Q2 June 2024

## Summary

This meeting considered the standing items of NPg business plan delivery (including highlights of areas under performing), updates from the Business Plan Engagement Group (BPEG) leads, now including the Head of Data & Digitalisation becoming a regular addition, the connections congestion queue, an update on NPg's progress of its DSO Review Panel<sup>1</sup> and how resourcing within the new Energy Systems directorate was progressing.

The meeting also included an update on Northern Powergrid's Foundation Fund (founded after Storm Arwen) with its Chair Joe Docherty in attendance. The ISG also received updates on NPg's external affairs and progress on its low carbon technologies (LCT) programme.

## BPEG update

Data & Digitalisation is aiming to make its action plan (including 6-monthly updates) accessible via NPg's website, to be more interactive with its stakeholders.

Sustainability is becoming an area of real focus for NPg with new appointments and the creation of a new Sustainability Delivery Group (first meeting scheduled for 20-Jun). NPg have also recruited a Youth Insights Panel, with a 'Getting to know you' meeting taking place next month.

Engagement continues heavily in the distribution system operations (DSO) space. There are no significant changes to stakeholder priorities being heard, with stakeholders seeking input and insight as to how things continue to be developed being the continuing theme.

NPg continues to keep good momentum with its satisfaction results which are picking up, driven through its small works connections space, which needs to transition across into other areas. Focus has also remained on NPg's customer experience whilst using the website.

## Business Plan update

Customer Services had a really positive quarter with some of its best ever results. Sessions with customers are underway introducing the connections user experience improvements.

The ISG highlighted some confusion with the report it receives; whilst it is useful, the indicators used to track performance can be misleading and don't show how the performance indicators impact the customer outcomes.

## Northern Powergrid Foundation Fund

The priorities for the fund set in May last year remain clear and unchanged, and it has now appointed a full board of Directors. The fund aims to help communities take action on climate change.

<sup>1</sup>Find out more about Northern Powergrid's Distribution System Operation Review Panel here: [DSO Review Panel | Northern Powergrid](#)

It has currently funded circa 60 projects (totally £900,000) with £250,000 of that being paid by this summer, with the projects focusing heavily on resilience in the areas worst affected by Storm Arwen e.g. batteries being installed in community centres.

### **Low Carbon Technology (LCT) update**

After looking at existing questions policy and practice, NPg is seeking to translate all this information into some practical advice, and is working with charities to help with signposting, although it is a small market currently.

The ENA is trying to set up working groups with all DNO's to share what is being learnt across all areas, but this is proving challenging, with most struggling to get set up.

There are lots of myths in this space which need dispelling. NPg are well positioned to support this.

### **DSO Review Panel**

The Chair of the DRP<sup>1</sup> reported that progress continues with a number of recommendations already being made to NPg which have been taken on board.

In its next meeting, NPg will focus on making inclusive decisions, ensuring no one is left behind and its Q4 meeting will conduct a review of its internal audit.

### **Broader Northern Powergrid Updates**

NPg reported that Scott Thon (Berkshire Hathaway) joined them virtually recently sharing thoughts on the upcoming UK election and how energy policy might change, the potential issues over the next 10 years and how things are placed in the UK economy.

Resourcing continues in the Energy Systems Directorate in NPg, however it is about 3 months behind schedule. NPg is recruiting a lot of people who don't necessarily have an electrical background. The directorate is also now holding regular meetings and conferences, getting the whole directorate together, talking about its challenges and activities.

Connections continues to be a challenge across the country with policy changing weekly, creating more barriers. The focus remains on sorting the connection queue including how to prevent people who are not ready to connect even getting into the queue. Meeting some kind of minimum criteria in order to join the queue is being explored.

<sup>1</sup>Find out more about Northern Powergrid's Distribution System Operation Review Panel here: [DSO Review Panel | Northern Powergrid](#)