

Annex A

Proposed Licence Condition Procedure and Timetable



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 Queens 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; Markets; Consumer Protection and Enforcement. The staff team includes economists, engineers, accountants, utility specialists, legal advisors and administration professionals.



Abstract

We are publishing our decision requiring NIE Networks and SONI to jointly develop, publish and periodically update a digitalisation strategy and action plan. We are introducing these licence conditions to increase transparency on their plans to digitalise, share energy system data and support accountability to provide benefits for consumers in Northern Ireland. The modifications will be implemented largely unchanged from the consultation with some additional time allowed. This document outlines the licence condition procedure and the timetable.

Audience

This document is likely to be of interest to SONI, NIE Networks, other stakeholders in the energy industry, government and other statutory bodies including consumer groups with an interest in the energy industry and digitalisation.

Consumer impact

Our overall aim is to improve the digitalisation of the energy system and ensure better use of data to create benefits for consumers such as:

- a more efficiently planned, maintained, and operated energy system;
- greater visibility of, access to and ease of use of information and insight about the energy system; and
- improved integration between the energy systems.

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1st digitalisation strategy development and adoption timelines <i>*Licence Modification due to come into effect 10 June 2025</i>			
3 rd requirement	Publish draft strategy	Licensee	31 March 2026
3 rd requirement	Consultation	Licensee	6 weeks
4 th requirement	Prepare and publish document summarising responses and/or whether will make changes	Licensee	12 weeks
5 th requirement	Prepare updated strategy for UR with or without changes		
5 th requirement	UR can direct further changes based on updated version	UR	4 weeks
6 th requirement	Adopt strategy	Licensee	30 September 2026
Ongoing Digitalisation Action Plan			
	Publish action plan	Licensee	31 March 2027 - Every 12 months thereafter
Ongoing Digitalisation Strategy			
NIE Networks and SONI must update strategy every 2 years (and go through the same development and adoption cycle noted above under requirements for the 1 st strategy)			

Please note that where the provisions in paragraphs 18-20 (5th or the 11th requirements of Part A) or 34-36 (3rd or the 7th requirements of Part B) apply in relation to dispute resolution the time frames outlined may be subject to change.