

Report on Northern Powergrid's Customer Engagement Group discussions in November 2020

Summary

The Customer Engagement Group¹ held further discussions looking at Northern Powergrid's work on developing its business plan for Ofgem's RIIO-ED2 price control process. This is the plan that will cover the 5 years 2023-2028.

The main items we discussed this month were Northern Powergrid's plans for **Distribution Future Energy Scenarios (DFES)** and **stakeholder engagement plans**.

The CEG have moved to working in sub-groups, to allow much deeper assessment of Northern Powergrid's business plan proposals as they go through the business plan process. This work is still in its early stages, and there will be further discussions on all the items currently being considered by the sub-groups before the company writes its draft ED2 business plan. We received reports of sub-group discussions on future **Reliability and Availability** of the network, and on Northern Powergrid's developing plans for **Data and Digitalisation**.

Growth Scenarios

Following our discussion in March ([Report on CEG meeting - March 2020](#)) we received an update from Northern Powergrid on their recent work in this area. The company provided modelling updated to reflect the new national planning scenarios and input from local stakeholders. This sets out several potential scenarios for future energy demand and will be used as a basis for investment proposals in the ED2 business plan.

We suggested that it might be worth considering expressing this plan as aimed at achieving a range of dates rather than a single point in time, given the gap between the national 2050 target for achieving net zero carbon emissions and the ambition for earlier dates among many local authorities, but the lack of strong evidence (so far) of firm plans to achieve these ambitions. We also emphasised the importance of demonstrating in a clear and transparent way the link between the option selected and the views expressed by stakeholders, so that stakeholders can see how their views have been considered.

¹ If you want to find out more about the role of the Customer Engagement Group look here:

<https://ceg.northernpowergrid.com/>

Reliability and Availability

The sub-group had learnt that Northern Powergrid does not have any customers that fall into the 'Worst Served Customers' category as defined by Ofgem, but is nevertheless planning to target improvements on those customers who currently experience the most disruption, in line with what stakeholders have said they want to see. We encouraged the company to ask Ofgem to amend its definition of 'Worst Served Customers' to better reflect the reality of customers' experiences.

Data and Digitalisation

Northern Powergrid had shared its most up to date thinking about what to include in its ED2 business plan in this area, and the sub-group had asked the company to be as clear as possible in its final plan on what the strategy will deliver in terms of customer impacts (KPIs, service costs, etc).

Stakeholder Engagement plan update

Northern Powergrid updated us on the work they had done to engage stakeholders in their 'Emerging Thinking' consultation on the options for their ED2 business plan. We recognised that this is a large and complex programme of work, and welcomed the quality assurance of it that is being undertaken. We asked the company to check that they are engaging a fully representative cross-section of customers.