

Report on Northern Powergrid's Customer Engagement Group discussions in March 2021

Summary

The Customer Engagement Group¹ held further discussions looking at Northern Powergrid's work on developing its business plan for Ofgem's RII0-ED2 price control process. This is the plan that will cover the 5 years 2023-2028.

The main items we discussed this month were progress on Northern Powergrid's programme of **Innovation** activities and its **Stakeholder Engagement Work**

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 planning process. We received reports of sub-group discussions on **Communities, Vulnerability, Customer Service, Customer Flexibility, Connections, Information/Operational Resilience, Climate Resilience, Environmental Action Plan, DSO Strategy, Data and Digitalisation** and **Whole System Solutions**.

Innovation

Northern Powergrid shared its most up to date thinking about its programme for innovation. The company explained that they have an ambitious programme to develop new capabilities and skills. They expect their innovations to come from both business as usual activities and projects funded by Ofgem's Strategic Innovation Funds, providing a balanced approach across the business. The CEG suggested that it might be useful to have a broader programme including business processes and consumer understanding, and with a greater emphasis on analysis of data once it has been acquired.

Stakeholder Engagement plan update

Northern Powergrid gave us a summary of key engagements over the last few months, noting that regional conferences are being scheduled in the coming months to feedback to stakeholders who have contributed to their consultations.

The company is developing its material for testing customers' views about the level of bills proposed for ED2, with a big emphasis on how to explain issues clearly and

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

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

straightforwardly. People in different vulnerable situations will be involved in this testing, including those who are in fuel poverty.

Northern Powergrid and Northern Gas Networks have developed a joint Local Areas Energy Plans (LAEPs) charter which gives a combined commitment of both organisations to help their local communities plan for the transition to net zero, and this will be published shortly.

Subgroup Reports

The Customer Engagement Group's Subgroups have been considering Northern Powergrid's detailed proposals in a number of the specific areas of the business plan, as set out above. In general, we were satisfied that the proposals reflect stakeholder feedback and results of benchmarking against other companies. We have raised a number of detailed points for the company to consider as it refines its plans, such as: the speed with which improvements in customer service are to be introduced; the operational capacity for dealing with extreme weather events; and how the Data and Digitalisation strategy will support data driven decision making in the company.