Our Stakeholder Engagement Report 2024/25

SP Electricity North West

Stakeholder Engagement Report Contents

We want this report to be easy for you to read and navigate. That's why we've chosen clear formatting with a readable font, added images, charts, and graphs to bring key points to life, and used plain language instead of industry jargon wherever possible. New this year, you'll also find a navigation bar at the top of every page so you can quickly jump to the sections that matter most to you.

Our report at a glance

Over the last 12 months, we have sustained a strong commitment to delivering high-quality, inclusive and meaningful stakeholder engagement.

This report sets out our strategic approach and brings it to life through real examples of how we have acted on feedback to deliver tangible change.

In August 2025, SP Electricity North West unveiled its new name and visual identity as part of the Iberdrola Group. This followed Iberdrola's majority acquisition of Electricity North West earlier in the year, making ScottishPower the UK's second largest distribution network operator (DNO). Together, we now deliver electricity to around 12 million people across more than 170,000 kilometres of network, stretching from Stirling to Stockport.

This is SP Electricity North West's second voluntary Stakeholder Engagement Report, highlighting our activities in the second year of the RIIO-ED2 price control period (2023–28). It focuses on the North West licence area, where we provide power to 2.4 million properties and more than 5 million customers. We serve communities across Cumbria, Lancashire and Greater Manchester, as well as parts of North Yorkshire, Derbyshire and Cheshire, in a region that stretches from the peaks of the Lake District to industrial heartlands and the vibrant streets of Manchester.

While this report is one important channel for demonstrating how we engage, it sits alongside a range of other publications. These include our Annual Vulnerability Report (how we deliver tailored support for customers in vulnerable situations) and our DSO Report (how we enable a just, inclusive and efficient energy transition), as well as performance updates on our websites.

You'll find clear signposts and hyperlinks throughout this document to explore these and other resources, including our Business Plan commitments and regional investment booklets.

This is about how we are building trust, delivering on our commitments, and creating lasting value for the people and places we serve.

Glossary

We have abbreviated terms throughout our report, where doing so improves clarity and readability. We provide the full form of an abbreviation at first use and then the abbreviation thereafter. A full list of the abbreviations and commonly used terms is provided in the glossary below.

ANM	Active Network Management
CBA	Cost-benefit analysis
CEM	Common Evaluation Methodology. Evaluates flexible alternatives to network reinforcement
DESNZ	Department of Energy Security and Net Zero
DFES	Distributed Future Electricity Scenarios. Forecasting plans for a range of scenarios for how low carbon technologies will be taken up and how the network could respond. The scenarios inform our investment plans and provide visibility of flexibility opportunities
DNO	Distribution network operator. A company licensed to distribute electricity in Great Britain by the Office of Gas and Electricity Markets (Ofgem)
DSO	Distribution Systems Operator. The systems and processes needed to operate energy networks in the net zero carbon future
ECR	Extra Care Register. The name for our priority services register which offers enhanced support to customers in vulnerable circumstances
ENA	Energy Networks Association. The trade body that represents the electricity transmission and distribution companies in the UK
Energy transition	The process of changing the energy system (including power, heat, and transport), from a system based on carbon-intensive fossil fuels, to one based on low carbon technology
EV	Electric vehicle
GIS	Geographic information system
GSP	Grid Supply Point
IOG	Independent Oversight Group. A panel of independent individuals, with an independent Chair together with members representing each of the six stakeholder advisory panels Now replaced by the ISG - see below
ISG	Independent Stakeholder Group is an independent group that provides perspectives on our insights, highlighting key risks, and opportunities.
KPI	Key performance indicators
LAEP	Local Area Energy Plan. A data-driven and whole energy system, evidence-based approach that sets out to identify the most effective route for the local area to contribute towards meeting the national net zero target, as well as meeting its local net zero target
LCT	Low carbon technology such as electric vehicles, electric heat pumps, solar and wind energy
LRE	Load-related expenditure. The installation of new assets to accommodate changes in the level or pattern of electricity or gas supply and demand

LRF	Local resilience forum
NESO	National Energy Systems Operator. An independent, expert, impartial body with new roles across electricity and gas
NGET	National Grid Electricity Transmission
NMS	Network Management System
Non-Firm connections	As distinct from Firm connections, Non-firm connections are typically single circuit whereby the connection becomes unavailable in the event of a fault or necessary maintenance. The connection remains unavailable for the duration of the necessary works. Non-firm connections also include flexible connections, whereby a customer's export or import is managed (often through real-time control) based upon contracted and agreed principles of available capacity. Our ANM enables more connections to the grid, including non-firm connections.
Ofgem	Office of Gas and Electricity Markets. The government regulator for gas and electricity markets in Great Britain
PV	Photovoltaics (in relation to solar)
RACI	Responsible, Accountable, Consulted, Informed. Framework which provides clear definition of roles and responsibilities across our key stakeholder groups
Reopener mechanism	A regulatory process that allows Ofgem to assess further funding during a price control period as the need, cost or timing of works becomes clearer
ED2	Electricity distribution price control period, 2023- 2028
ED3	Electricity distribution price control period, 2028- 2033
SECG	Stakeholder Engagement Challenge Group
SHE	Safety, health and environment
SP ENW	SP Electricity North West
VCFSE	Voluntary, community, faith and social enterprise
SROI	Social Return on Investment. The monetary value associated with positive outcomes received, and costs avoided by society because of a given initiative
Stakeholder	Stakeholders are those parties that are affected by, or represent those affected by, decisions made by SP Electricity North West and Ofgem. As well as consumers, this would for example include Government and environmental groups
tCO_2e	Tonnes of Carbon Dioxide equivalent

1. Foreword from Stephanie Trubshaw

I am pleased to present our Stakeholder Engagement Report for 2024/25, our second voluntary report and a reflection of our continued commitment to transparency, collaboration, and meaningful stakeholder dialogue. This document captures the progress we've made in listening to our communities, acting on their insights, and delivering outcomes that matter.

Stakeholder engagement is a valued and embedded function within our organisation. We recognise that our approach must remain dynamic and responsive, adapting to evolving customer priorities and ensuring our decisions reflect the businesses and communities we serve. This year, we're proud to report that overall stakeholder satisfaction has risen to 82%, reflecting growing confidence in our engagement practices and the tangible outcomes they deliver.

Over the past year, we've deepened our engagement across the region, reaching over 19,000 stakeholders and refining our stakeholder mapping to include 46 distinct groups. This enhanced framework has strengthened coordination and inclusivity, enabling us to recruit 29 new advisory panel members—expanding the panel base by 20% and increasing representation from community and advocacy organisations. Feedback from our panel chairs and members has helped ensure our work is consistently viewed through a customer and community lens.

We've also responded to shifting priorities in a challenging economic climate, with deliberative research conducted this year revealing a clear shift: customers now place greater emphasis on affordability and value for money—driven by persistent cost-of-living pressures—while a new priority has emerged: openness and transparency. At the same time, delivering a reliable and resilient network, both now and in the future, underpins our ability to meet these expectations.

Our stakeholders are central to the creation and implementation of our business plans. Our stakeholder advisory panels and (IOG) and now our new Independent Stakeholder Group (ISG) regularly review our performance metrics to ensure that we are delivering the commitments made to the region and Ofgem, the regulator, as part of our RIIO-ED2 Business Plan.

Stakeholder feedback has continued to directly shape several initiatives. Our Extra Care campaign, launched with the guidance of oversight groups, has already registered 95.7% of eligible households to our Extra Care Register (ECR), against a target of 90%. This has been driven by target advertising, strategic partnerships, and a focus on empowerment.

Engagement has also accelerated innovation. Our Active Network Management (ANM) system now enables fast-tracking of approximately 1.8 GW of connection schemes across the North West—advancing projects previously delayed by up to a decade.

Responding to stakeholder feedback. Over recent years we have heard feedback that we should have greater strategic engagement across our local authority partners and should communicate more around our investment in the region. I am delighted that this year we have increased our resource in both areas, meaning that we are better able to reach out to local authorities and regional partners to help them navigate and reach subject matter experts across a wide range of topics. Additionally, as our investment in the region ramps up, we are now better placed to engage locally to communicate how our £1 billion investment over five years is bringing benefits to support green and economic growth ambitions across the region.

We're also proud to be supporting local authorities with their decarbonisation journeys. Our collaboration has helped unlock £35.3 million in Local Electric Vehicle Infrastructure (LEVI) funding, enabling more strategic, community-led approaches to decarbonisation and infrastructure development.

I want to thank our stakeholders for their continued trust, insight, and partnership. Your contributions have been instrumental in shaping our strategy and driving our progress. As we look ahead, we remain committed to strengthening relationships, embracing innovation, and delivering lasting value for the communities we serve.

Together, we will continue to build a resilient, inclusive, and sustainable future—with stakeholders at the heart of every decision.

Stephanie Trubshaw, Chief Operating Officer

2024/25 engagement highlights

Established a new Independent Stakeholder Group.

Engaged 19,499 stakeholders over the past 12 months.

Worked with 165 Stakeholder Advisory Panel members, including 29 new additions this year.

Improved stakeholder satisfaction to 82%.

Advanced the co-creation of our Social DSO Strategy.

Delivered a significant leap in satisfaction with Distribution System Operator (DSO) data provision, reaching 89%.

Helped local authorities secure £35.3 million in LEVI funding.

Achieved 92.9% overall customer satisfaction — a new high.

Registered 95.7% of eligible households for the Extra Care Register.

Built strong stakeholder advocacy to support our £201.6 million load reopener.

Award winning

We are honoured to share that SP Electricity North West has been named **Utility of the Year at the 2024 Utility Week Awards.**
This recognition reflects a year of collaborative effort - highlighting our strong performance in customer satisfaction, safety, stakeholder engagement, storm response, innovation, and reliability.

We also received the **Innovation Award for our Net Zero Terrace project,** demonstrating how collective ambition and partnership can deliver healthy, low carbon homes without upfront costs to beneficiary residents. We're grateful to our stakeholders, partners, communities, and collaborators whose support made these achievements possible.

These awards follow further recognition for our Smart Street programme, which was celebrated at both the Edie Net Zero Awards and the Prolific North Tech Awards for its impactful contribution to energy efficiency and cost savings.

SP Electricity North West has been named
Utility of the Year
at the 2024 Utility Week Awards

2.1 Strategic framework for stakeholder engagement

We are a stakeholder-focused organisation, committed to continuously improving our engagement. **Since 2016, our approach has evolved through ongoing learning—both from our own experience and from emerging best practices across the sector.** It is grounded in internationally recognised standards for effective engagement: the AA1000 Accountability Principles (2018) and the AA1000 Stakeholder Engagement Standard (2015).

Our strategy is focused on delivering the things our stakeholders care about most. To do this well, we need strong engagement so we can understand what people need and want, listen to their feedback, and use it to guide our decisions and actions. This helps us deliver better outcomes for the North West. We aim to be open, transparent, and accountable, while building strong relationships and protecting our reputation.

As the UK moves towards a cleaner energy future, our electricity network faces big changes. We'll need to invest to meet new demands, but we can't do this alone. **We need to understand what others want to achieve, work together on solutions, and build support for those plans.**

At the same time, we must consider our environmental impact, maintain an efficient and reliable service, and ensure everyone can access the benefits of the clean energy transition.

Our stakeholder engagement vision:
A positive reputation demonstrated by understanding, insight and advocacy among stakeholders, enabling our licence to operate, helping achieve business objectives. **Scan the QR code opposite or *click here* for more information.**

Figure 1: The building blocks of our strategy

Our overarching stakeholder engagement purpose	Engagement with stakeholders helps understand diverse views and expectations and identify opportunities and risks	Stakeholder engagement informs strategic decision making	Stakeholder advocacy and trust support business strategy, growth and collaboration
Our strategic engagement objectives	Understanding **Develop awareness, understanding and trust on key issues with stakeholders**	Insight **Insight to inform better decision making and further business aims**	Advocacy **Stakeholder advocacy supporting business decisions**

Principles guiding our approach	Strategic and proportionate	Robust, high quality and based on best practice	Inclusive	Material and responsive	Transparent and measured

Engagement is a highly valued function within our business. While it is centrally coordinated by a dedicated team of engagement specialists, it is delivered locally by engagement managers and practitioners across the organisation. Colleagues follow a five-step cycle and implementation approach (see Figure 2).

We use a wide range of inclusive mechanisms to engage with stakeholders and continually adapt our approach based on the feedback we receive, including through our annual stakeholder satisfaction survey *(see page 37)*. One example of this feedback in practice has been refining the balance in recent years between online and in-person engagement.

Depending on the level of engagement needed, we use different channels: **to inform** (newsletters, social media), **to consult** (surveys, consultations, focus groups), **to involve** (workshops, advisory panels, bilateral meetings), or **to collaborate** (joint working groups, deliberative research).

We also make reasonable adjustments so that people from all backgrounds feel comfortable and confident taking part.

Importantly, engagement is not only about the events we host. It is also about supporting stakeholders in the spaces where they are already active. That's why we regularly play a role in stakeholder-led events as sponsors, keynote speakers, or supporters, and collaborate with partners, to strengthen relationships and broaden participation.

We recognise that engagement is a skill that requires ongoing development, and our culture actively supports and empowers colleagues to build their capabilities through training and peer-to-peer support, with the aim of strengthening relationships with stakeholders.

With over 10 years of experience, engagement is now firmly embedded in how we operate. However, we know we don't have all the answers. We remain open, curious, and eager to learn from how others engage and we're always looking for ways to improve.

Figure 2: Five step cyclical approach to stakeholder engagement

Figure 3: just some of the stakeholder events we have supported this year

2.2 Mapping our stakeholders

While we know our stakeholder groups well, their priorities and impact continue to evolve. Stakeholder mapping requires regular updates because stakeholders' levels of interest and influence can shift over time due to changes in political, environmental, social, technological, legal, and economic factors. We refresh this understanding annually to keep pace with our evolving operating environment.

Ensuring stakeholders are identified, assigned, and managed consistently across the business is critical to maintaining and improving stakeholder relationships to support positive outcomes.

This year we worked with independent consultants, to:

- Add/remove stakeholder groups on our map, which now consists of 46 groups **(Figure 4)**
- Identify top 10 stakeholders per group using prioritisation criteria, aligned to business outcomes.

This year, to enhance coordination, our central stakeholder engagement team **implemented the Responsible, Accountable, Consulted, Informed (RACI) framework.** This approach provides clear definition of roles and responsibilities across our key stakeholder groups. We allocated stakeholders to the RACI matrix and engaged the internal Stakeholder Engagement Challenge Group (SECG) and Executive Leadership Team to refine and approve our approach.

Our stakeholder mapping and RACI process revealed that while regional and combined local authorities were well-supported through regular bilateral meetings coordinated by central engagement managers, wider local authorities lacked similar access. To address this gap, **we established a new role dedicated to improving engagement and strategic relationships with these local authorities.** For more information on how this initiative is evolving, refer to **page 29**.

We also conducted a **data health assessment in Tractivity,** our stakeholder management system, updating stakeholder contact details and mapping, tracking evolving communication preferences, adding meeting sentiment measures and expanding platform use to coordinate events, newsletters, and surveys.

This year, our improved mapping informed the **recruitment of 29 new advisory panel members** (see page 34), about 20% of our total panel base. Notably, we've strengthened representation from community and advocacy organisations, ensuring our work is scrutinised through a customer and community lens.

2.3 Embedding engagement in decision-making

Over recent years, we are proud to have embedded triangulation as an ongoing discipline. Triangulation involves interpreting and prioritising topics and feedback by evaluating the quality and relevance of research and insights from various internal and external sources. This process follows the Government's Magenta Book guidelines for assessing research evidence.

Robust data and insights are **independently reviewed to identify where there is a weight of evidence** - including areas of consensus, differences in views, and gaps in knowledge. These findings are then synthesised quarterly and shared through several routes:

- **Wider colleagues** – In response to colleagues' request for greater visibility of insights to help "put ourselves in our customers' shoes", we launched Insight, a quarterly bulletin with findings and clear actions. Nine editions have been shared to date with our colleagues.
- **Internal Stakeholder Engagement Challenge Group (SECG)** – Comprised of senior leaders from across the business, this group regularly reviews emerging insights and identifies gaps and opportunities to address address stakeholder feedback.
- **External advisory panels** – These bodies, with over 165 participants, provide independent perspectives on our insights, highlighting risks and opportunities. Discussions are then often taken forward into our annual stakeholder regional workshops that are independently chaired and leadership supported.
- **Oversight and challenge** – The Independent Oversight Group (IOG) was created at the start of RIIO-ED2 to bring together the advisory panel chairs to ensure stakeholder views continued to drive decisions in the delivery of the Business Plan. It had regular engagement with senior leaders. This has now evolved in to the ISG, see section five.
- **Board and Executive** – Annually, insights are consolidated into a Stakeholders' Needs and Wants Paper that feeds into our business planning process, ensuring alignment with strategic priorities. See section three.

This year, we increased transparency around our decisions by **publishing You Said, We Did reports** in response to stakeholder feedback. Designed to keep our stakeholders informed about **how their input shapes our actions and leads to better outcomes for everyone**, our DSO You Said, We Did publication, highlights both strategic initiatives aimed at supporting future growth and impactful quick wins that are making a difference today. We will be publishing this report annually.

Figure 4: Our stakeholder mapping groups

National policy shapers

- This group comprises 11 key entities, including government departments, regulators, infrastructure agencies, consumer advocacy groups, and cybersecurity organisations

Local place makers

- Encompassing nine groups such as Members of Parliament (MPs), local and combined authorities, local resilience forums (LRFs) forums, charities, and community organisations

Customers

- This category includes 12 diverse groups, ranging from households and businesses to future customers, vulnerable energy users, community energy initiatives, and housing associations

Wider workforce and supply chain

- Comprising 11 groups, this category includes employees, trade unions, contractors, suppliers, specialist consultants, landowners, and investors

2.4 Strengthening governance and accountability

Our approach is built on clear governance, robust feedback channels, and strong executive commitment. Effective governance is essential to stakeholder engagement because it provides structure, transparency, and accountability. It ensures that roles and responsibilities are well-defined, decision-making processes are fair and consistent, and stakeholder input is meaningfully considered. Strong governance also **builds trust** by demonstrating that engagement is not ad-hoc but embedded in an organised framework where feedback informs strategy and actions.

Our external stakeholder advisory panels serve as platforms for open, honest, and constructive dialogue. These panels enable us to engage effectively with key stakeholder groups including customers, businesses, and regional representatives, as well as specialised forums focusing on environmental sustainability, digital innovation, and our role as a DSO.

The active participation of both our organisation and panel members fosters transparency and accountability, facilitating deeper understanding and informed deliberation. This year, we have enhanced our already robust advisory panel governance to align with Ofgem's requirements for an ISG and to reflect the core priorities outlined in our 2023–2028 business plan.

Following a number of membership changes, we disbanded our IOG, but many of its members have continued to contribute as independent chairs of our advisory panels, and two long-standing members have been appointed to our ISG. The ISG's primary focus is on future business planning (2028-2033), while the advisory panels concentrate on the delivery of our 2023-2028 business plan commitments to strengthen alignment.

In September 2024, the IOG identified a challenge in reviewing the 2023-2028 business plan commitments, noting the need for stronger oversight of the activities and data underpinning them at the advisory panels. Previously, stakeholder advisory panels assessed business performance using scorecards, however, these did not capture the full breadth of the 46 commitments.

In response, we reviewed and refined the process to ensure a clear and consistent 'golden thread' from commitment delivery to performance reporting. **We revised the allocation and format of scorecards for advisory panels,** making clear where metrics relate to business plan commitments and other measures. In addition, we worked with advisory panel chairs to ensure that business plan commitments topics were addressed at panel meetings where deeper insight was required.

To demonstrate accountability for delivering against our promises, we publish an annual report on our performance. **Scan the QR code opposite or *click here* for more information** on our 2023-2028 Business Plan Commitments and the progress we are making.

Figure 5: Insight triangulation through a strong governance structure

2.5 Measuring engagement effectiveness

This year, our engagement efforts reached **19,499 stakeholders** *(excluding market research).*

We systematically **monitor our stakeholder engagement activities,** tracking the number of participants, the groups involved, the topics discussed, and other relevant profiling information. Our commitment to continuous improvement drives us to seek feedback on the effectiveness of every engagement. Additionally, we invite broader input on our overall programme through our annual satisfaction survey *(see Section 5.2).*

Analysis of engagements tracked by our engagement managers in Tractivity revealed that the **most frequently discussed themes** this year were achieving net zero, delivering a reliable and resilient network, and supporting customers in vulnerable situations.

To enhance how we monitor stakeholder engagement, users logging stakeholder interactions in Tractivity can now record engagement sentiment as **positive, neutral,** or **negative.** Launched in July 2025, this new capability will enable us to:

- Track stakeholder sentiment over time, by stakeholder group (using our updated mapping), and topic.
- Equip colleagues with insight into previous engagement sentiment ahead of meetings, enabling better preparation for upcoming discussions.

We collaborate with other DNOs around the use of Tractivity to facilitate improvements and a consistent approach to recording and metrics.

Our internal Stakeholder Engagement Working Group meets quarterly and serves as the central forum for **sharing lessons learned from stakeholder interactions across the business.** It enables engagement managers to collaborate on best practices, address common challenges, and understand how successful strategies from past activities can be reproduced in future engagements.

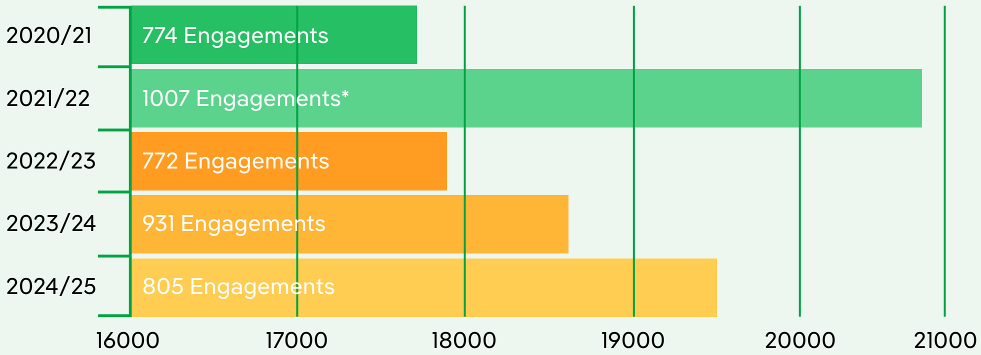
As well as holding us to account for the delivery of our RIIO-ED2 Business Plan Commitments, our stakeholder advisory panels act as an engagement forum whilst also ensuring that our engagement approach across the audiences and themes they represent is meaningful, inclusive and robust.

We also work with **third-party experts to assess the quality and impact of our engagement,** using their insights, alongside stakeholder feedback and operational data, to refine our approach. These findings are shared across SP Electricity North West to close any knowledge gaps and continually improve.

As a business committed to broader social and environmental goals and driven by a performance-based culture, we recognise that **strong engagement alone isn't enough—it must translate into action and deliver tangible results.** We assess the impact of our investments to ensure we allocate resources to initiatives that deliver the greatest value and scalability for our customers. Our evaluations blend both qualitative and quantitative data, measuring financial and non-financial benefits through well-defined metrics.

As a business committed to broader social and environmental goals and driven by a performance-based culture, we recognise that **strong engagement alone isn't enough—it must translate into action and deliver tangible results.** We assess the impact of our investments to ensure we allocate resources to initiatives that deliver the greatest value and scalability for our customers. Our evaluations blend both qualitative and quantitative data, measuring financial and non-financial benefits through well-defined metrics.

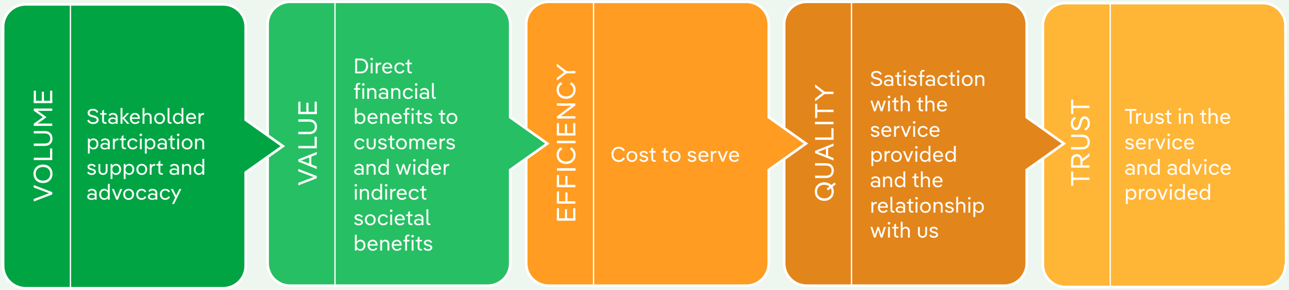
Figure 6: Number of stakeholders engaged



**Enhanced in 2021/22 as peak of Business Plan engagement.*

Figure 7: Key discussion themes recorded this year

Figure 8: Metrics commonly used to measure engagement outcomes



In our engagement, we frequently **involve participants in co-creating the metrics we use to monitor progress and measure success against our goals.** A practical application of this approach was the series of co-creation workshops held with customers, local stakeholders, and with the oversight and challenge of our DSO Stakeholder Panel, during the development of our Social DSO strategy this year. This model is relatively unique, and stakeholders emphasised the importance of incorporating both quantitative and qualitative success indicators. They also urged us not to lose sight of the **"people behind the numbers",** affirming that **success is about more than just financial metrics**. Central to this mission is inclusion—learning from what worked well (and what didn't) and sharing these insights widely.

Where we can quantify outcomes, we make a full assessment of the impact of our initiatives through a range of tools such as:

- **Ofgem's cost benefit analysis (CBA):** Baseline CBA for reinforcement and investments
- **Common evaluation methodology (CEM):** Evaluates flexible alternatives to network reinforcement
- **Whole-system CBA:** Assesses interventions from a wider system or societal perspective
- **Social return on investment (SROI):** Quantifies social, wellbeing and environmental benefits.

We align with **standardised tools and methodologies to enhance consistency and comparability**—enabling stakeholders to benchmark our performance against other regions with greater confidence and accuracy. For example, in our Annual Vulnerability Report (31 July 2025), we adopted the same price bases as other networks and achieved full standardisation by using common, rather than bespoke, proxies to measure the net present value of benefits delivered through energy, money, and low carbon technology advice services.

Last year, Ofgem's DSO Performance Panel Report highlighted key areas for improvement across the industry, including the need for "more rigorous quantification of benefits" and the "development and inclusion of standardised metrics." It also noted that transparency was limited by companies using different terminology for the same activities.

In response, **SP Electricity North West led the creation of the Energy Networks Association (ENA) DSO Collaboration Forum.** Our Year 2 DSO Performance Panel Submission reflects the progress we've made so far. Through collaboration, we've achieved greater alignment in terminology, including how benefits are described, who the beneficiaries are, and how benefits are categorised.

Looking ahead,

In 2025/26 we will continue chairing the DSO Collaboration Forum to develop a consistent methodology for calculating the most common benefits, further strengthening comparability and transparency across the sector.

3. Listening to and addressing stakeholders' needs and wants

3.1 Summary of stakeholders' needs and wants

Each July, our Executive Team reviews the annual *Stakeholders' Needs and Wants Paper*—an **independent synthesis of insights from the previous 12 months of research and engagement.** The paper highlights key opportunities and risks to inform both the delivery of our RIIO-ED2 programme and the development of our ED3 business plan. It also reflects on the outcomes achieved in response to last year's themes.

This year, the analysis identifies **three core building blocks of customers' and stakeholders' wants,** summarised in **Figure 9**. These translate into **clear needs and opportunities** all of which are underpinned by trust. In today's turbulent geopolitical and economic climate, uncertainty and vulnerability are widespread, making trust, honesty, and principle-led action more important than ever.

Figure 9: Stakeholders' core needs and wants from SP Electricity North West

	Wants	Needs and opportunities
Maintaining trust	1. Delivering a safe, reliable, and affordable service	• Proactive investment – the ability to connect and access power, whenever and wherever needed • Making smart investments that help manage costs and can reduce overall bills in the long run • Providing value for money
	2. Creating personalised and differentiated services	• Protection and fair treatment of customers • Personalised support for business and domestic customers • Targeted support to enable access to flexibility opportunities
	3. Building resilience in a rapidly changing environment	• Maintaining resilience in a changing climate • Expanded awareness and education programme • Pathways for meaningful community involvement

In the upcoming sections, we will further contextualise these insights with emerging trends, and in Section four, we'll bring them to life through real-world case studies—detailing where the insights were gathered and how we partnered with stakeholders to drive meaningful change.

3.2 Understanding customers' priorities in a changing world

This year we undertook qualitative research and discussed what customers expect from utility providers in a series of focus groups. A cross-section of people representing different demographics agreed on six key themes, illustrated below:

Figure 10: What customers expect from utility companies

Safe and reliable service levels (at a fair price)

Behaving like a responsible business (doing the right thing, even when it's hard)

Links into (and understanding of) the community it serves

Get the basics right (with ongoing feedback from customers)

Sustainability and climate change challenges met

Protecting those in vulnerable situations

Customers acknowledged that escalating living costs, a decline in living standards and increasing challenges for vulnerable customers are prominent issues in current discourse. They agreed that it is more crucial than ever for businesses to "do their bit" to support those facing social inequalities. However, amidst political and economic uncertainty, they also noted a concerning trend of diminishing trust in businesses' ethical conduct. The panel emphasised that society will be more willing to adopt the behaviour changes required of them in the long term if large corporations set a strong example through ethical behaviour, as this builds legitimacy, trust, and shared responsibility.

In this context, utilities are expected to forge strong links with local communities, enabling them to better respond to their needs and involve people in the solutions. Customers expressed a desire for companies to "give back" to the communities that help them achieve their goals. These insights offered a valuable foundation for our Social DSO Strategy in pursuit of sustainability and addressing climate change challenges.

We invest in collecting, processing, analysing, reporting, and sharing data to work smarter and provide extensive insights into vulnerability trends. By partnering with organisations that hold local understanding of community-level challenges, we enrich our intelligence and outlook. Our Annual Vulnerability Report, published on 31 July 2025, summarises the most pressing vulnerability issues we are observing across the North West region.

The most pressing vulnerability issues of the day - how are North West consumers currently feeling?

1
Energy bills remain the top concern, with 58% of adults worried in spring 2025 and energy bills consistently outranking other household bills

2
40% of young people worry about money at least daily and 50% are often afraid to look at their bank balance

3
51% of people in the North West report feeling less safe than five years ago—a reflection of rising uncertainty

4
There is growing mistrust in businesses' ethical conduct amid political and economic uncertainty and rising fears of scams

5
Just 19% of people in the North West feel they can make a meaningful contribution towards achieving net zero

To sharpen our understanding of evolving customer priorities, we commissioned DJS Research to conduct deliberative research with four cohorts of households and businesses, reaching over 40 participants, alongside a quantitative survey of 1,298 individuals, which included a representative mix of households, businesses, prospective customers, and those in vulnerable circumstances.

The results, illustrated in **Figure 11** (on the next page), show small but meaningful shifts since 2020. Customers are now prioritising keeping bills as low as possible and seeking greater value for money—often even above network reliability—largely driven by ongoing cost-of-living pressures and consistent concern about energy affordability. Interestingly, delivering a resilient network has also grown in importance, a trend our insights suggest is tied to heightened public concern around the increasing frequency of extreme weather, energy security threats, and cyber incidents, all of which have etched resilience more strongly into public consciousness.

The research also identified a new priority, openness and transparency, which validates what we heard in our qualitative research that amid ongoing uncertainty and change, customers seek stability through strong leadership defined by reliability, openness, accountability, and a commitment to responsible conduct—hallmarks of a high-performing organisation.

This robust sample allowed us to uncover insights with high granularity—by region, house type, age, life stage, socio-economic status, ethnicity, vulnerability, low carbon technology ownership, and business size.

While reliability and affordability are shared concerns, there were some notable preferences between groups:

- Younger, urban and more affluent households are more likely to prioritise sustainability, net zero progress, and future-proofing the network
- Older adults, vulnerable customers, and those on lower incomes tend to focus on keeping costs down and ensuring dependable service
- Residents in rural Cumbria prioritise strengthening the network to withstand extreme weather, reducing power cuts and improving reliability in worst-served areas, or those where there are greater numbers of customers in vulnerable circumstances
- Small businesses want increased support during a power cut and to reduce the duration of roadworks, and large businesses increasingly value proactive investment to ensure the network can support growing demand in a green energy future.

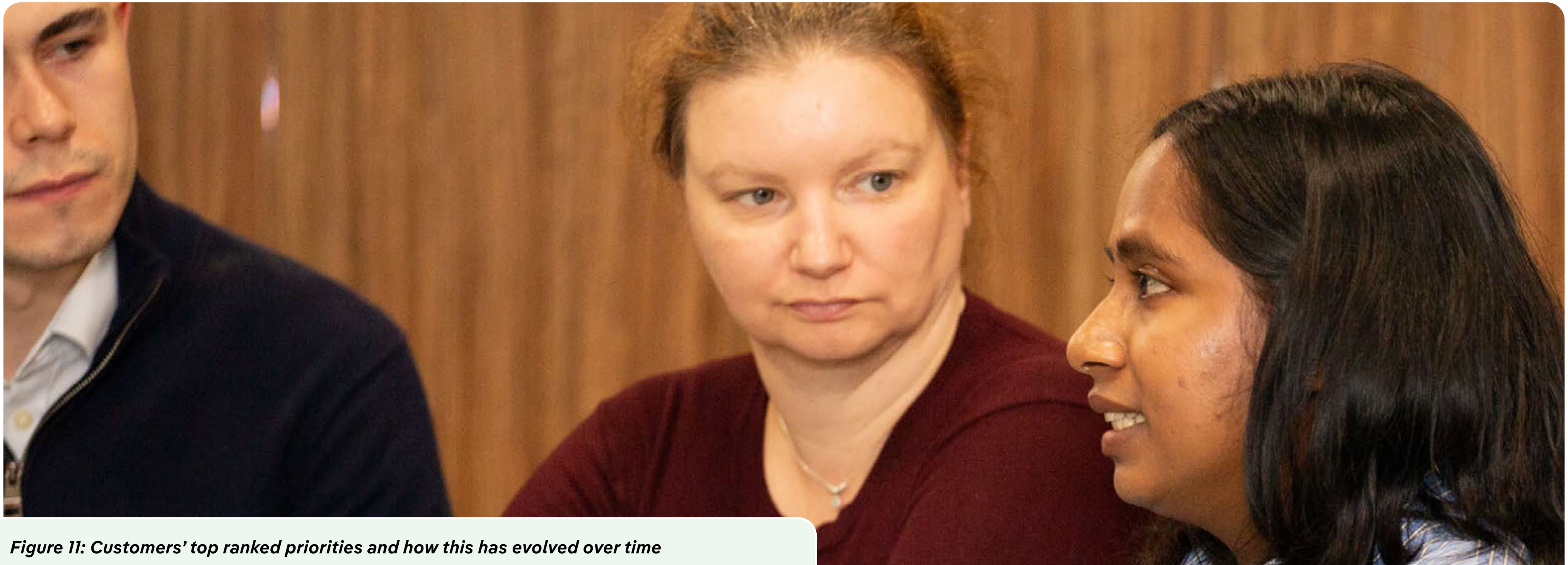
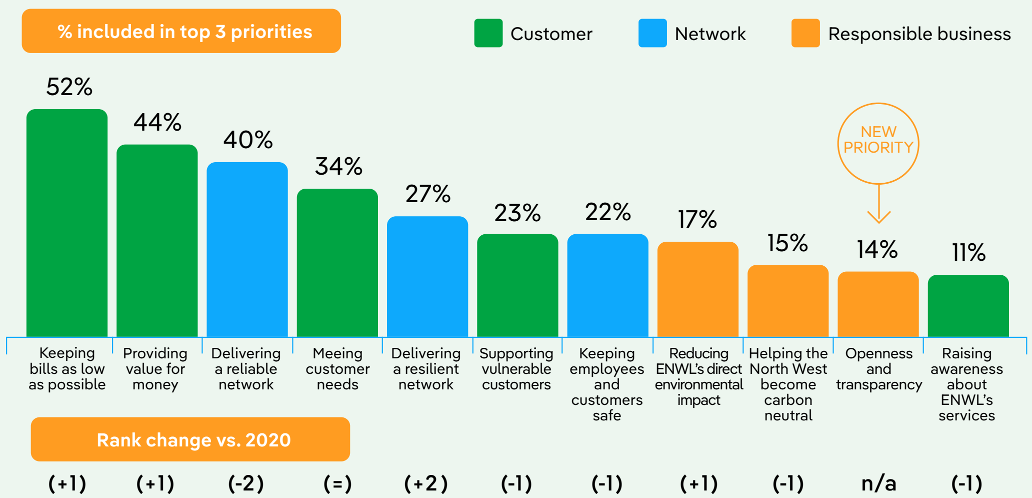


Figure 11: Customers' top ranked priorities and how this has evolved over time



4. Turning stakeholder feedback and advocacy into meaningful action

4.1 Delivering a safe, reliable, and affordable service

Customers and stakeholders expect a service that is safe, reliable, and affordable, considering these attributes the foundation for meeting all other expectations. Embedded in this objective are key priorities: making proactive investments that ensure power is available wherever and whenever it's needed, investing smartly to manage costs and reduce bills over time, and delivering clear value for money.

Case study: **Staying committed to safety**

Strategic context

Our drive for safety as an industry isn't just a nice to have, but a key part of our licence to operate. If we can't get safety right, we won't be trusted to do anything else. Safety isn't a competition, so we collaborate and look at what other industries are doing so that we can learn from them.

What we heard

This year, we launched an internal annual **safety culture survey using the Health and Safety Executive's Safety Climate Tool**—an independent framework for assessing safety culture through our workforce's perspective. The 1,600 responses highlighted areas for improvement, including training, and fostering an environment that encourages positive challenge.

Analysis of our **operational data** revealed 19 incidents on the power network this year—many involving farm machinery contacting wooden poles or overhead lines. These events present serious safety risks and often cause local power outages while engineers work to secure the area.

We typically see a spike in these incidents during harvest period. We engaged extensively with the wider energy industry through the **ENA's Safety, Health and Environment (SHE) Committee** and heard a shared concern about a rise in safety incidents across regions—not only on farms. For example, there has been an increase in incidents involving youngsters trespassing or causing damage to substations during school holidays.

Based on insights from our priorities research, which engaged over 1,300 customers, it's evident that safety is deemed non-negotiable. Participants also highlighted the importance of educating the next generation. They emphasised the need to reinforce key safety messages, support STEM curriculum learning, and communicate electricity's critical role in advancing the energy transition.

What we did

At the heart of our progress are the three Cs: concentrate, commit and comply. One of the most significant improvements identified through our safety survey has been **investment in new equipment and tools** to make site work safer and more efficient. For example, we upgraded road breakers from petrol to battery-powered, significantly reducing hand-arm vibration while also lowering environmental impact.

Through our **Drive Safe, Arrive Safe initiative**, we also continued to strengthen our road safety culture — reducing driving incidents by 15% year-on-year through targeted training, enhanced monitoring, and the rollout of our new telematics solution.

Survey feedback also helped us enhance our award-winning training programmes, **equipping apprentices with additional safety awareness** from the start of their careers. From fire brigade demonstrations to safe driving courses, our training is practical and engaging.

In June 2025, we hosted the **34th Annual ENA ENA SHE Management Conference** in the North West. At the event, our Asset & Investment Director, Paul Killilea, presented our new baseline safety competence model for front-line managers, supported by both internal incident investigation and external IOSH Managing Safely training.

As part of **Farm Safety Week, we urged farmers to make safety their top priority**—captured in the simple message look out, look up. This advice mirrors the approach taken nationally, reminding farmers that even everyday machinery like spray booms and harvesters can put operators at risk when working near live overhead lines. More widely we expanded our safety messaging to reach people involved in DIY digging, urging them to check for underground cables using plans available on our website's safety pages. We also cautioned those fishing or using ladders to be mindful of overhead lines, and warned against flying drones near such lines to avoid serious risk.

We recognise the important role we have as the network operator for the North West of England to educate young people about staying safe around electricity and our infrastructure, while sparking their curiosity in STEM subjects and in future careers with us.

Following a year of reviewing our STEM education provision to primary and secondary pupils, in September 2024 we relaunched our programme alongside new partners STEMfirst and Science Made Simple. The new school-based sessions cover curriculum subjects such as electrical circuits as well as skills and careers and new safety-related resources. Our workshops reached 8,380 pupils during 2024/25, with many more accessing our online educational resources.

Our primary school education education programme, 'SwitchedOn!', was rolled out successfully throughout the year, throughout the year, with around 2,170 students 2,170 students in 74 schools taking part part in hands-on classroom-based activity developed around KS2 lessons on electricity circuits and key safety messages.

Key stats:

8,380
pupils reached through our education programme

97%
pupils more confident about electrical circuits after attending a Switched On! workshop

100%
teachers said that Switched On! achieved its learning outcome

On average, two people are killed each year in the UK when mechanical equipment comes too close to, or contacts, overhead power lines, with many more sustaining serious injuries.
Scan the QR code to watch the Look Out, Look Up safety video.

Or explore our electrical safety tools, designed for students and educators. Here you can access videos, KS2 and KS3 curriculum materials, and join the **Safety Squad**—our safety superheroes who help identify hazards and teach everyone how to become a safety hero too!

Stakeholder impact

- Between 12 November 2023 and 10 January 2025, we did not experience a single lost time injury—signifying continuous, serious improvements in safety. We were recognised by the ENA this year as the top-performing DNO in key safety measures.
- In November 2024, we achieved our highest-ever colleague engagement in our Climate Survey with 90% participation. Colleagues rated 'health and safety' and 'pride' most positively at 90%. This has been informed by our colleague engagement and responsiveness to feedback.
- Around 2,170 gained knowledge to keep themselves and their loved ones safe, influence family energy behaviours, and become inspired to pursue skills and careers in the energy industry.
- Over the past seven years, we've achieved a 90% completion rate among apprentices, far exceeding the current national average of around 60%, and all who pass are offered full-time roles – embedding safe working practices from day one.

Case study: **Minimising disruption to communities from our work**

Strategic context

Our role has always been to deliver electricity safely, reliably, and efficiently—from its point of generation to where it's consumed. As demand grows, we must replace aging infrastructure with modern, high-capacity assets while navigating supply-chain pressures and minimising disruption to local communities as we deliver major schemes of work.

What we heard

In November 2024, we hosted face-to-face **regional stakeholder events** in Lancaster and Manchester. Attendance increased significantly, with 130 stakeholders participating—up from 84 in 2023. We were pleased to welcome a diverse range of organisations and industries, including local authorities, housing associations, academic institutions, energy and utility companies, large businesses, developers, charities, and suppliers.

Stakeholders were informed of our plan to invest £1 billion over five years to reinforce the central Manchester network, upgrade National Grid connections, and expand capacity for strategic projects including the Cumbria Ring, motorway service area enhancements, the Blackpool Airport Enterprise Zone, and new renewable generation at with sites across the region. In response, stakeholders asked for dedicated supplier events to discuss our upcoming pipeline of work—an invaluable opportunity to foster alignment and collaboration. Local authorities also expressed the need to better align their schemes with ours and other utilities, and to improve coordination of communication around project delivery.

We notify customers ahead of planned power cuts to ensure safe working. Feedback from **Ofgem's Broad Measure of Customer Satisfaction** and our **Rant & Rave SMS survey** show that, even though satisfaction scores are improving, customers still want clearer explanations—specifically why the power cut is necessary, its purpose, and where the work will be done. To refine our messaging, we ran **six focus groups** across diverse demographics. Participants reviewed 14 common messages, suggested clearer wording, and requested email or text message versions of our notification card to be sent six days before and again 24 hours before an outage, as they felt paper cards can get lost or mistaken for junk. Linked to this feedback, our **Digital Futures Advisory Panel** challenged us to use our understanding of customers' needs and wants to tailor our digitalisation initiatives to deliver a seamless experience.

When underground cables are damaged, we conduct planned or emergency roadworks to restore power swiftly. However, this can cause disruptions—traffic delays, noise, pollution, and reduced trade for nearby shops. Members of Cumbria Tourism, from our **Environment & Sustainability and**

Economic Growth Advisory Panels, highlighted that even businesses not directly notified are affected as tourism suffers when road closures deter visitors. Roadworks also consistently rank among the top five causes of customer complaints.

What we did

We enhanced our planning process to clearly document work locations—helpful when our field activity isn't visible to customers. We co-created new messaging with customers to explain why the work matters. We also launched a **Planned Power Cut e-card,** which customers receive via email or text message and can access online by searching our website. Additionally, we created a dedicated video and web pages explaining common projects such as LineSIGHT, a new overhead line monitoring technology being rolled out across the North West. LineSIGHT delivers fast, accurate fault detection, improves response times, and enhances public safety by pinpointing issues on the network. All of these initiatives were advanced through our digitalisation strategy action plan.

We have increased resources so that we can proactively reach out to local authorities and strategic partners across a range of topics. We have regular meetings with them to reach a wider audience.

In July 2025, we hosted a **half-day, in-person supplier event** to cover our upcoming pipeline, safety strategy, and project communication. Attended by senior leaders and key stakeholders, it fostered knowledge sharing and innovation. This year we created a new role, **Capital Projects Communications Lead,** to strengthen coordination. At the event, we shared actions already applied to a £13 million investment benefitting 42,000 customers in Oldham, including:

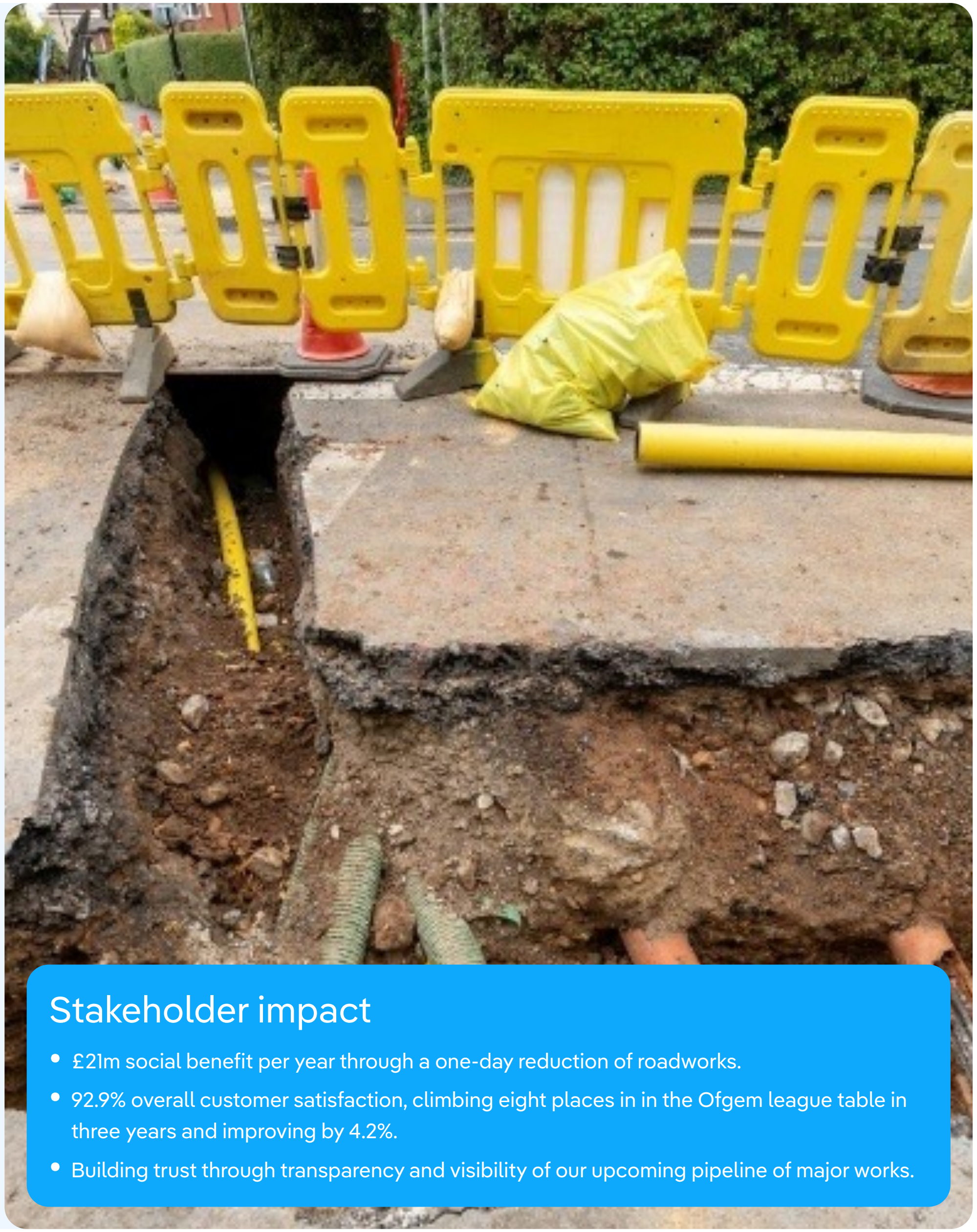
- Regular coordination with local authorities, Transport for Greater Manchester (TfGM), contractors, and suppliers
- A dedicated capital projects section on our website featuring route maps, letters, press releases, and updates
- Tailored communications plans including press releases, events and social media for each project to keep communities informed
- Engaging media, such as videos and drone footage, to showcase progress
- A community event to directly inform impacted customers
- Integrated support for vulnerable individuals via our inclusion team and contact centre.

Linked to our long-standing **engagement with the** Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA) Infrastructure Board, we have joined a new Strategic Infrastructure Pilot in partnership with TfGM, United Utilities, and Cadent to enhance **collaborative streetworks.** As a member of the pilot's steering group, we will support GMCA in its role as the central coordinator—working closely with delivery teams to share data and improve the planning and execution of infrastructure projects, particularly along major routes affected by our capital delivery programme.

Our Dig, Fix & Go initiative—named by our customers—is significantly reducing disruption during emergency and urgent LV cable faults. We track performance from when we are issued the permit right through to closure. Between 2015 and 2023, we completed 5,880 such repairs annually, averaging 5.8 days per fault. For the 2023–2028 period, we agreed a target of 5.1 days with Ofgem, and we are already outperforming it at 4.4 days. This improvement stems from stronger supply chain collaboration, reduced permit durations, faster access to excavation data, and enhanced monitoring.

In response to stakeholder feedback, we enhanced our **regional investment booklets** at last year's regional stakeholder events and continue to refresh them. These booklets highlight our work across the region and our intended investment during 2023-2028.

Scan the QR code opposite or *click here* for more information.



Stakeholder impact

- £21m social benefit per year through a one-day reduction of roadworks.
- 92.9% overall customer satisfaction, climbing eight places in in the Ofgem league table in three years and improving by 4.2%.
- Building trust through transparency and visibility of our upcoming pipeline of major works.

Case study: **Using technology and feedback to deliver value for money**

Strategic context

Digitalisation is key to the future energy system. In our DSO Transition Plan for RIIO-ED2, we commit to building the systems and data foundations needed to become flexibility ready.

Flexible connections allow customers to connect to the network sooner by dynamically managing capacity, without having to wait for full reinforcement. Reinforcement means increasing the capacity of the shared electricity network, such as upgrading overhead lines, underground cables or transformers, so it can safely carry more power without overheating or failure.

Flexible connections benefit the connecting customer, enhance system resilience, support consumer outcomes, and help lower the grid's carbon intensity for generation. We offer a range of flexible connection schemes across transmission and distribution networks that accelerate access for new generation, storage, and demand-side users, including electric vehicle (EV) chargers and heat pumps.

What we heard

Ongoing and open customer and stakeholder engagement provides the place-based insights we need to make the right network decisions at the right time. Our consciously diverse **DSO Stakeholder Panel** meets quarterly to guide the pace and scope of our transition. This year, the panel urged us to clarify the benefits of our work and improve how we track impact across stakeholder groups.

We utilise eight DSO personas to ensure we address stakeholders' needs. Over the past year, we held **11 webinars and events with 437 delegates.** Stakeholders have challenged us to use our ANM system to **accelerate connections** that would otherwise be delayed by transmission network reinforcement queues, which are a critical bottleneck to decarbonisation, renewable rollout, and cost efficiency.

We also welcome ongoing input from Ofgem's DSO Performance Panel. This year, that feedback focused on providing clear evidence of rollout and impact.

What we did

This year, we successfully tested and commissioned our industry-leading integrated ANM system, developed in partnership with Schneider Electric and integrated into our network management system (NMS).

Recognising industry-wide connection challenges, we collaborated with other DNOs, National Grid Electricity Transmission (NGET), the National Energy Systems Operator (NESO), and Ofgem to pivot our ANM development to ensure it could manage both distribution and transmission constraints.

Stakeholder engagement informed our development and communication of these accelerated connections. Thanks to these efforts, our ANM system can fast-track approximately 1.8 GW of connection schemes across the North West, advancing projects delayed by up to ten years. Most of these are renewable generators or battery storage sites, which contribute to net zero goals, supply resilience, and encourage participation in flexibility services.

We also developed our ANM system and internal processes, to be able to introduce Technical Limits at ten of our Grid Supply Points (GSPs). This allows non-firm (also referred to as flexible, curtailable, or conditional connection) early connections where transmission constraints persist, and is managed by our ANM system in coordination with NGET and the NESO. This facilitated quicker customer connections through ANM for 37 potential schemes.

We've initiated ongoing, twice-yearly meetings with NGET and the NESO to align our network forecasts, pursue whole-system solutions, and ultimately lower costs for customers.

This year, we responded to feedback by refreshing how we understand and measure benefits. We revised our approach to clarify the rationale behind our actions and track key performance indicators (KPIs). Recognising the value of accelerated connections enabled by ANM, we now report their implementation as a quarterly KPI.

More broadly we are playing an active role in national connections reform discussions, working closely with the ENA, DESNZ and industry partners to ensure a fairer, faster, and more transparent connections process for all customers. In 2025/26 stakeholders will be able to join our webinars to hear directly from experts, explore key topics in clean energy, and get your questions answered in real time.

Check out our upcoming sessions and past recordings to stay informed and inspired. **Scan the QR code opposite.**

Visit our website for more detail on national and North West initiatives on releasing capacity and accelerating connections.

Stakeholder impact

- Delivering real and tangible benefits: Increase from £18m to £29m in benefits year-on-year, £11.4m from accelerating connections.
- Accelerating generation customers by six years and demand by four years through flexible connections:
  - **Benefits to connected customers** through accelerated connections on the network through flexible connections which reduce wider energy system costs (e.g. reducing the amount of higher-cost gas generation needed) which feeds through to customer bills.
  - **Benefits to connecting customers** through flexible earlier connections providing the opportunity to develop their projects sooner and in their preferred locations, enabling them to make investments and earn returns more quickly
  - **Benefits to wider society** through 54,684 tCO_2e carbon emissions avoided (over FY 24/25).
- DSO stakeholders can see a step change: Increase from 7.93 to 8.86 satisfaction year-on-year.

4.2 Creating personalised and differentiated services

Creating personalised and targeted services ensures responsive support for our customers. At the same time, we uphold customer protection and fairness by delivering these services transparently and inclusively ensuring everyone—especially those facing financial or situational barriers—can access tailored support without discrimination or undue complexity.

Case study: **Providing bespoke, data-driven tools to support local net zero progress**

Strategic context

Digitalisation is key to the future energy system. In our DSO Transition Plan for RIIO-ED2, we commit to building the systems and data foundations needed to become flexibility ready.

To support stakeholders to facilitate regional decarbonisation and economic growth, we share information on future energy trends and the impact they will have on the electricity network. We have a wealth of data available to us that can help empower impactful and informed decisions. By supporting our stakeholders and customers to understand and engage with our data, they are better placed to take positive action towards net zero. In turn, that helps us plan, make decisions and play our role in the transition—a win-win.

What we heard

We serve 35 local authorities and two combined authorities (with a third in development), each offering unique, place-based insights and opportunities for economic growth and climate action. This year, our LAEP team engaged all 35 authorities—reaching over 370 officers through bilateral meetings, follow-up surgeries, and ongoing support. 82% of those authorities contributed data to inform our Distribution Future Electricity Scenarios (DFES).

We also commissioned an independent review of our LAEP support, including interviews with representatives from 16 authorities, to evaluate effectiveness, identify gaps, and highlight improvements.

Beyond this, we engaged more than 300 stakeholders through conferences, forums, and bilateral meetings. Feedback, captured in our You Said, We Did report, informed the development of our data roadmap and related tools.

A synthesis of these insights revealed that SP Electricity North West is regarded as proactive, visible, and responsive—while also highlighting areas needing attention:

- Many local authorities lack the funding and expertise to develop LAEPs and decarbonisation plans.
- Councils and community energy groups often struggle with limited tools, data, and support to plan solar, EV infrastructure, or access funding such as DESNZ Net Zero Accelerators and LEVI funding.
- There's a need for greater transparency such as publishing a pipeline of data requests with decision timelines, use cases, and release dates.
- In addition, our Digital Futures Advisory Panel urged us to do more to showcase our open data portal and our Economic Growth Panel was keen to ensure that energy planning can support regional growth and ambition.

What we did

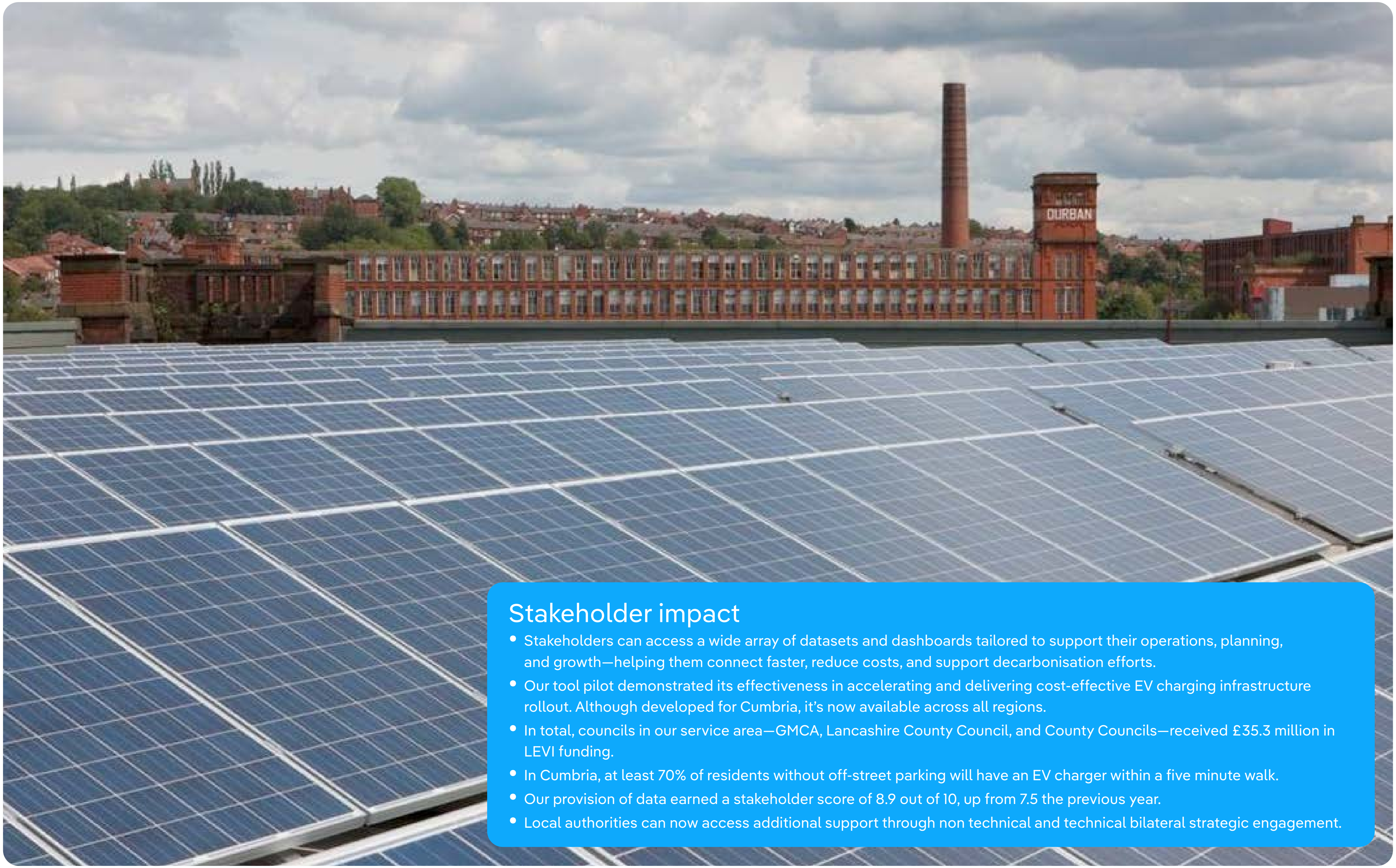
We are committed to unlocking investment through LAEP projects. For example, we supported Westmorland and Furness Council to deliver the 2 MW solar farm at Sandscale Park. We also sit on Oldham's Green New Deal Delivery Partnership, collaborating on the design and delivery of £5.6 billion in low carbon infrastructure to achieve net zero. We contributed strategic, technical, and engineering advice on projects such as electrifying heat and transport, decarbonising key council sites, and expanding community energy.

We expanded our Open Data Portal by 125%, adding 43 new datasets covering areas like capacity headroom, connection queues, and flexibility data. To enhance accessibility, we launched the Data Education Hub, added 'data journeys', improved navigation, and introduced clearer visual tools such as map overlays. We also held bespoke sessions with local authorities to demonstrate how our heatmap tool and generation capacity headroom dataset can help site selection for solar farms based on current and future capacity.

We showcased our open data via online forums, then went further this year by partnering with Open Data Manchester to host a 'data dive' with Kraken, a leading energy-tech firm. This session brought together a range of stakeholders to explore data from our Open Data Portal and additional sources. Participants focused on data accessibility and sharing, with particular attention to community solar photovoltaics (PV) datasets. They identified key areas for improvement in the portal's interface—especially around postcode search functionality and location identification—highlighting how user experience enhancements could better serve stakeholder needs.

In response to feedback from Westmorland and Furness Council and Cumberland Council, we developed two tailored web tools—the Grid Charge Planner and Small-Scale Solar Project Planner. These tools help councils evaluate solar PV connection viability and identify suitable EV charging locations aligned with network capacity. Councils have used these tools to engage in more transparent, evidence-based discussions with parish councils, enabling informed decisions on feasibility and cost. We also provided hands-on support during their funding applications and planning process, offering assistance with site feasibility assessments and cost estimates.

To improve transparency, we published our data roadmap highlighting future improvements based on industry practice review.



Stakeholder impact

- Stakeholders can access a wide array of datasets and dashboards tailored to support their operations, planning, and growth—helping them connect faster, reduce costs, and support decarbonisation efforts.
- Our tool pilot demonstrated its effectiveness in accelerating and delivering cost-effective EV charging infrastructure rollout. Although developed for Cumbria, it's now available across all regions.
- In total, councils in our service area—GMCA, Lancashire County Council, and County Councils—received £35.3 million in LEVI funding.
- In Cumbria, at least 70% of residents without off-street parking will have an EV charger within a five minute walk.
- Our provision of data earned a stakeholder score of 8.9 out of 10, up from 7.5 the previous year.
- Local authorities can now access additional support through non technical and technical bilateral strategic engagement.

Case study: **Tailoring support for those most in need via the Extra Care Register**

Strategic context

Based on data from the Centre for Sustainable Energy (CSE), approximately 978,000 households qualify for our free ECR, which offers additional support during power cuts. Our goal is to reach and register as many eligible households as possible. We use 2011 census data and mid-2020 population estimates as our baseline, recognising that population changes, such as births, deaths, relocations, and evolving household needs, mean eligibility shifts over time. To avoid leaving anyone behind, we aim to exceed 100% registration.

What we heard

By the end of 2023/24, **benchmarking** showed DNOs registered between 57% and 93% of eligible customers, with the North West achieving the third-highest rate at 82%. In response, the **Consumer Vulnerability Oversight Panel** urged us to maintain this momentum in 2024/25, progressing toward our revised stretch target of 90% registration by 2028, without compromising data quality, and leveraging partnerships to register under-reached groups.

Our **data-driven strategy** highlighted the **largest gaps in membership by location,** with eight of the top ten gaps being in Greater Manchester. The most under-represented groups were families with children under the age of five, those with sight loss and those living with dementia. To expand outreach, we consulted our **Consumer Vulnerability Partnership Panel** for partner recommendations. They suggested working with local authorities and introduced us to organisations supporting carers and parents of young children, and engaging primary care networks to reach social prescribers.

Through our engagement with the advisory panel and **customer focus groups,** we've also heard growing unease about using 'vulnerability' as a catch-all term. Their concerns include:

- **Lack of clarity:** 'Vulnerability' is often used without a clear definition, leading to conceptual ambiguity. Terms like 'vulnerable life situations' are preferred, as they avoid labelling entire groups and emphasise the temporal, situational, and structural nature of vulnerability.
- **Stigmatisation:** The use of the term 'vulnerable' can reinforce harmful stereotypes of passivity and dependency, and often serves as a barrier itself, deterring people from seeking or accessing support.
- **Obscuring structural factors:** Broad usage of 'vulnerability' can mask systemic issues such as poverty, discrimination or inadequate access to services, focusing on individual traits rather than the wider context.

What we did

In response to this feedback, we launched our Extra Care campaign in spring 2025. The campaign stepped away from traditional imagery and conversations that label people as 'vulnerable', and instead, reframed the narrative— highlighting the situational or structural contexts that may lead someone to need extra support, without assigning a permanent label. By leading with empowerment, advocacy, and normalisation, our campaign encourages people to not see asking for assistance as a sign of weakness, but as a positive decision for their safety and wellbeing.

We continued our mature embedded five-step approach to the management, promotion, and maintenance of our ECR:

1. +428,875 (+24% year-on-year) records shared with other utilities and suppliers to create a 'one stop shop'
2. +92,022 (+9% year-on-year) members registered through our colleagues' routine interactions with customers
3. +63,715 (+10% year-on-year) members registered through proactive and targeted advertising of the ECR
4. 23,697 members leaving the register in response to proactive contact and their circumstances changing
5. 12,761 member duplicates, deceased individuals and those traced to addresses outside our service area removed.

As ever, **our partners played a significant role** in bridging the registration gap and signposting our services to their communities. Here are just a couple of examples of new initiatives over the last year.

Expanding reach with Regenerage (formerly Age Concern Lancashire)

Our longstanding partner, Age Concern (Lancashire), has rebranded as Regenerage, reflecting a renewed mission to support older people across North West England, particularly through home visits and specialist dementia care. We collaborated to promote the ECR across Regenerage's 13 retail outlets. In-store dual-branded displays and a dedicated waiting area with a large TV screen raise awareness of power outage preparedness and drive sign-ups. Regenerage staff also engage customers directly to boost awareness.

Finally, we strengthened engagement with local authorities. **Bolton Council** included ECR information for the first time in their 2024/25 **council tax bill**—a new channel for promoting our service.

Postnatal support via Badger Notes app

This year, we launched a pioneering initiative to simplify postnatal information for new parents and relieve pressure on NHS staff. Recognising that parents often feel overwhelmed by the volume of information they receive at discharge, we produced midwife-led videos covering essential postnatal topics in a clear, engaging, and accessible format. These are available via the Badger Notes app, enabling families to access them both in the hospital and at home. Content is provided in the ten most widely spoken regional languages and includes subtitles. **Each video prominently highlights the benefits of the ECR service for families with children under five**—enhancing the postnatal experience while saving time for NHS staff. This scalable model can be adopted across any NHS Trust.

Stakeholder impact

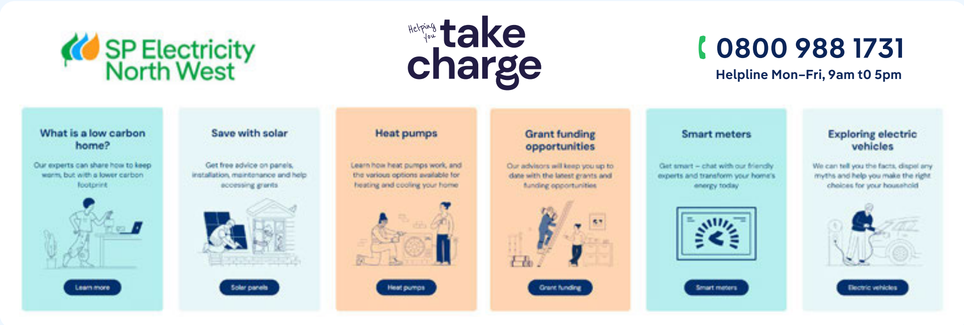
- This year we increased our ECR reach from 82.4% to 95.7% of eligible customers, reducing the gap to just 4.3%.
- Membership offers both individual and community benefits, including enhanced resilience during power cuts; reduced anxiety and distress and minimised lost time through proactive updates; and improved wellbeing at home, such as access to backup power for medically dependent electricity users.

Case study: **Adapting our Take Charge advice services to reach new groups**

Strategic context

In April 2023, Ofgem introduced enhanced obligations for DNOs to ensure that customers most at risk of being left behind in the energy transition receive the support they need. By March 2024, we had responded with a new, free, and impartial advice service under our established Take Charge brand—already a trusted provider of energy and money guidance. Take Charge - Go Low Carbon was designed to help customers explore low carbon energy options and make well-informed choices. We began with an in-house pilot to maximise learning, with the goal of refining the customer journey and quickly adapting in response to feedback.

Our service is accessible through multiple touchpoints, including a freephone line, email, an online form, and a dedicated microsite. Since we expected most customers to prefer speaking with someone directly, we designed the microsite to guide them toward a phone conversation rather than act as a standalone resource, ensuring that each interaction remains personal and engaging.



What we heard

In the first six months, we supported just 30 customers by phone. Issuing calls to action through marketing campaigns wasn't enough to drive usage of the service and we used engagement to explore how best to adapt the Go Low Carbon advice service.

Trusted partners, such as **Age UK South Lakeland,** reported frequent enquiries about low carbon technology (LCT) and often needing to spend days identifying the right answers. We heard that our service fills a vital gap in impartial advice, but that we should adapt our approach:

- **Service entry points:** People moving into properties with LCTs, such as older adults in assisted living, often lack the knowledge to use them and need immediate support. Additionally, owners of LCTs need advice, not just those who are considering them.
- **Customer segmentation:** Distinguish between those in fuel poverty and those who can afford LCTs but are not yet engaged. Explore how best to segment audiences and whether to reach them directly or via partners.
- **Community outreach:** Engage people in familiar spaces, rather than trying to draw them into unfamiliar or artificial settings.

In partnership with **Cumbria Action for Sustainability** (CAfS), we gathered evidence from local communities to better understand the key issues, benefits and appetite for the transition to EVs. A total of 805 citizens took part in our survey, 416 from Cumbria via CAfS channels, and 389 through our **Voice of the Customer Feedback Panel,** capturing additional views from Greater Manchester and Lancashire.

In response, we heard 28% of respondents say they intend to buy an EV within the next five years and that their inaction could be overcome through resources such as informal 'ask the expert' webinars.

What we did

In response to stakeholder feedback, we enhanced our programme by integrating proactive outreach, adding 19 in-person engagement events and pop-ups in community settings. **We participated in events planned by community groups** and set up stalls in shopping centres, supermarkets, at coffee mornings, local authority referral network gatherings, and business events.

To expand our support, we **partnered with Together Housing** on a low carbon retrofit programme, including heat pump installations. We delivered tailored advice to help tenants get the most from their new system.

We explored stakeholder feedback on customer segmentation and discovered that existing LCT advice services, including Cosy Homes in Lancashire, LEAP, Groundwork, National Energy Action (NEA), and other non-profit organisations, are typically geared towards low-income households. This raises a key question: **How can households that are not in fuel poverty receive trusted advice, local installation solutions and follow-up support?**

Figure 12: Difference in customer segmentation: existing schemes vs. our pilot programme

COSY HOMES IN LANCASHIRE	GREENER HOMES IN LANCASHIRE
• Focused on low-income households	• Focused on higher income households
• Includes all tenures	• Private households only
• Measures funded through grants	• Measures paid for by private finance
• Contracts with installers	• Does not contract with installers
• Warmth is the priority	• Sustainability is the priority

To address this, we **co-funded the 'Greener Homes in Lancashire' pilot** in January 2025 under the Take Charge umbrella, **delivered in partnership with Green Rose Energy.** Green Rose Energy, a not-for-profit community interest company, was commissioned to deliver this low carbon advice to households that had contacted Cosy Homes but were ineligible for grants as they were identified as 'able to pay'. The pilot supported 150 customers, providing expert advice by phone, or in-person on LED lighting, smart meters and home automation, solar panels with battery storage, EV charging and assistance available from energy suppliers and network operators.

The pilot highlighted that telephone advice works effectively when customers have proactively opted in and requested support, helping explain why traction for our broader Take Charge service was comparatively lower. Partnering with Green Rose Energy also allowed us to leverage their strong reputation and expertise in LCTs and broaden our reach to include homeowners at the start of their home improvement journey, (older) homeowners that aren't comfortable with digital solutions, and confident households that want recommendations for installers.

In response to the feedback in our EV survey in collaboration with CAfS, we developed the **EVs Made Easy** module. We presented survey findings and the module at a community engagement event and through an online webinar, to assess interest in accessing low carbon information in this format. Both events saw strong attendance and received excellent feedback. Consequently, we are expanding this initiative into an ongoing series of webinars and lunch-and-learn sessions covering various LCTs, such as **Solar Made Easy.**

Stakeholder impact

By pivoting our engagement strategy we built remarkable momentum in the second half of the year. We supported 411 individuals with personalised advice, 80% of which was delivered through our events programme.

- Our advice service already achieves a 90% satisfaction rate, helping users feel confident about taking the next steps.
- Beyond individual advantages, there are broader impacts whereby participating in the energy transition, users contribute to societal progress. In this way, our advice service fosters both personal and collective agency—exactly what's needed to tackle the major challenges ahead.
- Our Take Charge money and energy advice service has delivered £10.2m of benefits to fuel poor customers over two years.

4.3 Building resilience in a rapidly changing environment

In today's world of rapid and unpredictable political, economic, social, and technological change we partner closely with customers and stakeholders to build resilience. Using our convening power, we align efforts around education, awareness, and support, and create clear pathways for genuine community engagement—safeguarding trust and ensuring participation in the energy transition, even in the most challenging moments.

Case study: **Leveraging stakeholder advocacy to guide strategic regional investment**

Strategic context

We use our Capacity Strategy to prioritise zero cost options like smarter network management and release capacity in very short lead times. Following the zero cost options, we prioritise flexible solutions wherever it is robust and economic to do so. When the capacity requirements cannot be met by non-asset solutions, our next step is to proceed with reinforcement through co-ordinated network development.

A re-opener is an 'uncertainty mechanism' put in place by Ofgem to enable DNOs to apply for additional funding beyond the allowances set in our current business plan for RIIO-ED2 (2023-2028). Load-related expenditure (LRE) is used to fund additional capacity on the electricity network due to new connections or growth in demand and generation.

What we heard

We need to ensure our network can support economic growth, so we have engaged extensively with stakeholders to understand their plans and refine our forecasting models. These include programmes for EV charging at motorway and A-road service areas, electric bus depot charging, and wider economic development. In summer 2024, we updated our **DFES 2023** with the latest intelligence from local stakeholders:

- Through **bilateral meetings with 35 local authorities, businesses, and motorway service operators,** we identified around 120 planned development areas with high certainty, which have been factored into our analysis.
- **Quarterly strategic meetings with economic growth leads in upper-tier authorities** helped us track regional plans and emerging issues; aided also by attending 13 GMCA boards, including the Greater Manchester 2040 Transport Plan, Greater Manchester 5 Year Environment Plan, and Bee Net Zero board.
- Our **IOG and advisory panels reviewed engagement feedback and investment assumptions,** highlighting the need to consider customer bill impacts. Separately, the **Economic Growth Advisory Panel** provided key trends and datasets to underpin the economic growth case.

What we did

This year we reviewed our LRE for RIIO-ED2 to ensure long-term capacity for customers and prepare for continued investment into ED3 and beyond. Guided by our DSO Capacity Strategy, we focused on delivering economic, efficient solutions through **co-ordinated network development**—looking across the whole network rather than tackling isolated constraints.

A key example is the South Heywood Northern Gateway project in Greater Manchester. Instead of multiple piecemeal upgrades, we built a new primary substation, avoiding six separate primary upgrades. This cut costs by 22% and reduced both disruption and delivery times.

Two transmission schemes at Harker and Heysham, along with the associated reinforcement of our Cumbria Ring and Blackpool Enterprise Zone, were key components of our January 2025 LRE re-opener submission to Ofgem, where we requested £201.6m of additional allowances to meet evolving stakeholder needs and ensure the network is fit for the future. By seeking these allowances, we are acting now to future-proof the network, support economic growth, and minimise customer disruption. To embed this approach, we have introduced monthly portfolio review meetings between our DSO and Connections teams to challenge, refine, and improve our planning processes.

We carried out **acceptability testing for the additional allowances requested in our LRE with over 1,000 customers,** which showed that 81% of domestic customers and 94% of businesses found a forecast increase of £2.38 and £3.77 on their annual bill respectively acceptable.

We also shared information with advisory panels, local authorities, MPs, and stakeholders, securing **22 letters of support** submitted to Ofgem as part of our case. To read more about our comprehensive engagement and the planned developments **click here.**

We expect to hear from Ofgem on an LRE decision around autumn 2025.

Stakeholder impact

- MPs, along with 81% of domestic and 94% of business customers, supported the LRE request for £201.6m in additional allowances.
- Investing now delivers earlier societal benefits and avoids future costs, with a return of £1.18–£1.25 for every £1 spent.
- Reinforcing and expanding the network supports regional economic growth, attracting investment, creating jobs, and developing skills in the North West.
- Strengthening infrastructure enables LCTs like EVs and heatpumps, helping the region meet decarbonisation targets.
- Certainty in our investment pipeline allows supply chain partners to mobilise efficiently, optimise procurement, and mitigate supply risks.

Case study: **Leading by example in decarbonisation and nature restoration**

Strategic context

We don't just support resilience—we demonstrate it within our own operations by actively reducing our business carbon footprint and advancing biodiversity initiatives. Our carbon footprint is aligned to the science-based target initiative (SBTi) for 2024/25 reporting onwards. We aim to reduce our carbon emissions by 63% by 2035, relative to a 2019/20 baseline. We also aim to enhance biodiversity and natural capital across 100 sites by 2028, and plant 10,000 trees per year.

What we heard

We were proud to be a headline sponsor of the **Greater Manchester Green Summit** for the seventh year running. Hosted by the Mayor of Greater Manchester, Andy Burnham, we've been a supporter since the first event in 2018. At the event we asked stakeholders where we could collaborate and add more value, and biodiversity came out very strongly.

This key theme was echoed by the 130 stakeholders attending our **regional stakeholder events** in Lancaster and Manchester in November 2024. Attendees wanted to see leadership from us around reducing emissions, connection of renewable generators to the network, and biodiversity enhancement. There were also offers from many partners to share best practice and collaborate, such as linking up with local councils' nature recovery strategies.

Our **Environment & Sustainability Advisory Panel** emphasised the value of expanding collaboration on biodiversity and nature strategies, including with United Utilities and the Environment Agency. They stressed the importance of aligning regional ambitions with local initiatives. While our sustainability goals span the North West, local nature recovery strategies operate at the county level. In response, GMCA volunteered to elevate their county-level nature plans to the strategic board for broader alignment.

The panel also raised an important issue regarding sulphur hexafluoride (SF_6), a potent greenhouse gas used in network equipment, and challenged us to commit to a long-term plan to phase out future use of SF_6 as soon as it was technically feasible.

What we did

With a dedicated Biodiversity Manager and a natural capital tool to assess sites and track progress, we are advancing our biodiversity uplift programme across 100 sites. This has provided practical insights and revealed new opportunities for habitat enhancement. At our flagship Sandsfield Road site in Carlisle, grassland has been restored to species-rich meadow with support from **Cumbria Wildlife Trust.** Following stakeholder consultation, we also partnered with the **Cumbria Coastal Community Forest** to plant over 10,000 trees. In March 2025 we planted a further 700 trees at a site in Penwortham, which was used as a site visit opportunity for the Environment and Sustainability Panel and colleagues have also been engaged via colleague volunteering days.

The next phase is to extend our **Natural Capital and Biodiversity Baseline tool** to assess the full potential of our estate, ensuring habitat management contributes to local and regional nature-based solutions. This will guide targeted actions to enhance ecosystem services, delivering benefits for both our business and society. We have also introduced a field reporting system enabling biodiversity teams to capture live on-site GPS data on flora, fauna, habitats, and invasive species.

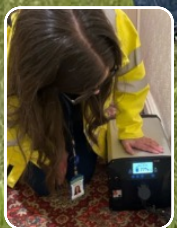
On carbon emissions management we made good progress, reducing emissions to below our 2024/25 target of 18,190 tCO_2e. We realised the benefits from our investment in **fuel efficiency** and installed a new solar-powered car charging port at our Training Academy, making it our **first net zero site.**

14% of our emissions stem from our use of around one million litres of diesel in generators to ensure power continuity, particularly for vulnerable customers. To reduce this, we're optimising refuelling logistics and trialling cleaner technologies including **biofuels and hybrid or battery options.** In support of our vulnerable customers, our Annual Vulnerability Report highlights case studies from South Lakes and Lancashire, where we've deployed 30 long-life lithium battery systems. To date, 127 customers who are medically dependent on electricity have received 3 kW battery packs, ensuring uninterrupted care during outages.

Our known SF6 network bank currently exceeds 16,000 kg, our leakage rate exceeded our annual leakage limit of 0.3% of our total bank in 2024/25 with a rate of 0.38%. This increase was due to an increased inspection regime for some of our pole mounted assets that contained SF6 that have experienced leakage. We chair the ENA SF6 Working Group. We chair the ENA SF_6 Working Group and have engaged a specialist contractor to recover and safely dispose of equipment containing SF_6. With the EU's Regulation 2024/573 banning SF_6 in new medium-voltage switchgear from January 2026, and applying to higher voltages by 2032, we are developing our SF_6 strategy. We are exploring SF_6-free projects and technologies to ensure compliance with these evolving regulatory requirements and we are working closely with our advisory panel members to ensure transparent reporting.

To demonstrate accountability for delivering against our promises, we publish an annual environmental report on our performance.

Scan the QR code opposite or ***click here*** for more information on the progress we are making.



Stakeholder impact

- By leading by example on climate and nature, we can reinforce stakeholder trust—in effect closing the loop between engagement and action.
- We emitted 17,882 tCO_2e against our SBTi target of 18,190 tCO_2e and this keeps us on track for our net zero journey.
- Embracing nature-based solutions with collaborative partner approaches sends a strong message about shared ownership, innovation, and effectiveness, encouraging deeper engagement and co-investment.
- Batteries provide vital backup power during power cuts for essential medical devices including ventilators, feeding pumps, oxygen concentrators and sleep apnoea machines. Using batteries over diesel reduces emissions and helps households remain safe, functional and independent, significantly reducing the need for emergency services or hospital admissions.
- Larger diesel batteries help to connect communities faster during a power cut, although encouraged by stakeholder feedback, we continue to collaborate and seek out alternative fuel sources, so that we can better balance reliability and environmental considerations.

Case study: **Helping customers and communities be better prepared for emergencies**

Strategic context

In severe-weather events, DNOs have consistently demonstrated their ability to collaborate effectively—both with local resilience forums (LRFs) and with each other—by sharing resources to support affected customers.

What we heard

This year, a Government report claimed local authorities are not doing enough to enhance local resilience, particularly in the face of potential emergencies, citing a lack of coordination among different agencies. Whilst we have good relationships with our regional LRFs and collaborate across many areas, particularly during storms and power outages, our **Consumer Vulnerability Oversight Panel** has challenged us to explore the benefits of working with local partners to integrate collaborative practices in major incidents to routine faults.

What we did

We worked with the **Greater Manchester Resilience Forum** (GMRF) to explore approaches to enhanced resilience. Initial efforts focused on Wigan (which experienced significant flooding in January 2025), and Rochdale.

We have launched a trial to improve coordination among local agencies during extended power cuts, as well as other emergencies. As part of this, we signed an agreement with **Groundwork** to deliver Communities Prepared, a national resilience programme.

We are **funding two part-time roles** to support the initiative, building on existing community networks. Working with local authorities; the voluntary, community, faith and social enterprise (VCFSE) sector; LRFs; community emergency volunteers; flood wardens; parish councillors; and other partners, the programme will help communities prepare for, respond to, and recover from incidents such as power or water outages, flooding, and heatwaves.

Since going live in April 2025, we have **strengthened relationships** with the **Environment Agency's Flood Resilience Engagement Advisers, British Red Cross Education teams, and local authority emergency planners.** We have also shared ECR data at lower-layer super output area level across the three trial regions to inform local engagement plans.

Stakeholder impact

The project will engage over 400 people through resilience workshops. In collaboration with GMCA, we've developed success metrics to track improvements in community preparedness and resilience using pre- and post-workshop questionnaires. Expected impacts include:

- **Collaborative efforts:** Enhanced coordination among local organisations, leading to improved resilience activities.
- **Adaptation strategies:** Educated communities on adapting to climate change effects, including severe weather and utility disruptions.
- **Emergency preparedness:** Strengthened community capabilities to prepare for, respond to and recover from various emergencies.
- **Community wellbeing:** Raised wellbeing and confidence through empowerment to address climate change effects.
- **Resource awareness:** Improved knowledge of available assistance, such as ECR and initiatives by local agencies.

5. Building and maintaining trust

5.1 Independent oversight from our advisory panels and ISG

1 Independent Stakeholder Group

6 Stakeholder Advisory Panels

165 Advisory Panel Members

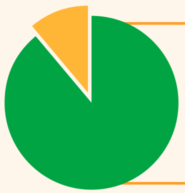
56 Meeting hours

12 Topics discussed on average

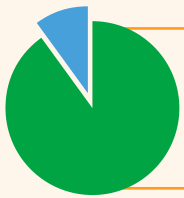
Our stakeholder engagement programme is continually evolving to meet both organisational goals and stakeholder needs and focus.

Ahead of the RIIO-ED2 period (2023–2028), we refreshed our stakeholder advisory panel structure in line with Ofgem's guidance on enhanced stakeholder engagement. In addition, we established our Independent IOG—chaired independently and comprising representatives from our advisory panels—to bolster assurance that customer and stakeholder feedback remains central to decision-making. In its first year, the IOG scrutinised our performance against our business-plan commitments, including our Storm Arwen and load reopener applications.

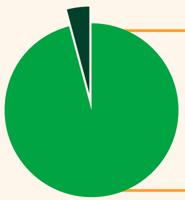
This year, we reviewed the effectiveness of our panel structure through a member survey and in-depth discussions with panel chairs. More than 165 stakeholders regularly contribute their time and expertise across our advisory panels, and of those that contributed to the survey, feedback was largely positive:



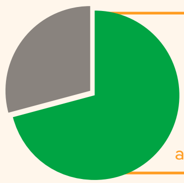
89% of members were clear on the purpose of their panel



90% were able to attend most, if not all, panel meetings



96% felt they had sufficient opportunity to contribute and share their views



71% reported that participation benefited both their organisation and the stakeholders they represent

Members asked for more 'You said, we did' updates to reinforce the connection between feedback and action. In response, we've made them a regular feature in our meetings and revamped this year's annual report to include more case studies.

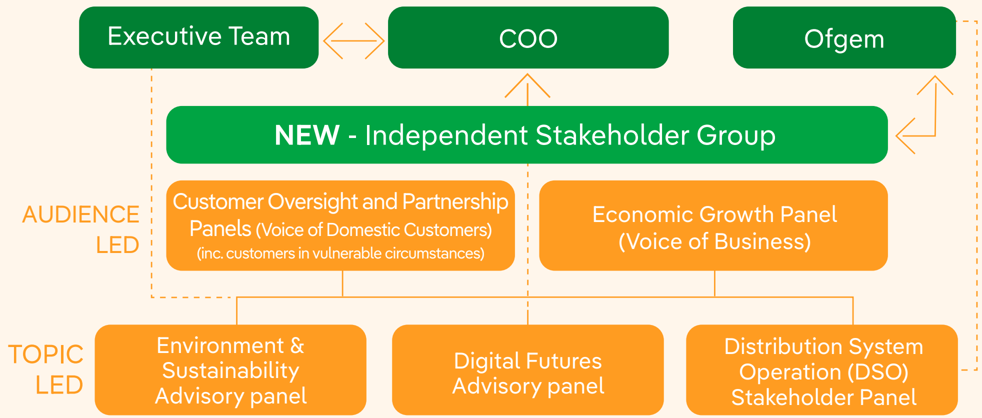
Feedback also pointed to overlapping responsibilities across advisory groups, so we've merged the 19-member Stakeholder Insight Advisory Panel into our thematic panels to streamline coordination and focus.

We now operate six independently chaired advisory panels:

- **Economic Growth** – 28 members
- **Customers in Vulnerable Circumstances** - Strategic – 7 members
- **Customers in Vulnerable Circumstances** - Partnership – 37 members
- **Environment and Sustainability** – 57 members
- **Distribution System Operation** – 9 members
- **Digital Futures** – 17 members

Coordinated by the central stakeholder team, each panel meets quarterly, includes regional experts and key stakeholder representatives, and is attended by a member of our leadership team. Acting as a 'critical friend', the panels help us track progress against our ED2 business plan commitments.

Ofgem's recent guidance has further clarified expectations for stakeholder input and oversight, reinforcing the critical role engagement will play in the development of our ED3 business plan. With ED3 planning gathering pace and further Ofgem guidance arriving, we updated our oversight structure. In particular, the ISG has formally superseded the IOG. This shift ensures our advisory panels remain focused on delivering the ED2 business plan, while the ISG—mandated under the ED3 framework—now leads required stakeholder scrutiny and engagement for the next phase of planning.



The ISG includes national and regional experts, representing key skills and audiences in the development of the ED3 Business Plan. It was appointed in early 2025 and held its first meeting in May 2025. Its Chair meets regularly with our Executive Team and remains an active member of the national network of independent stakeholder group chairs, supporting coordination at a national level.

Our ISG members: Biographies available on our website

Dr. Jayesh Parmar – Chair

Todd Holden – Vice Chair

Dorcas Batstone OBE

Dr. Alan Whitehead

Emma Degg MBE

Jenny Willis

Graeme Sims

Professor Bamidele Adebisi MBE

We have invited the independent chairs of our advisory panels to comment on our stakeholder engagement approach for 2024/25.

Elise Wilson, Chair of our Economic Growth Panel, said:

"The Economic Growth Panel is made up of business-minded individuals committed to driving growth and supporting SP Electricity North West in fulfilling its role in that journey. Our discussions are fast-paced and collaborative, with SP Electricity North West demonstrating a strong commitment to continuous improvement and a responsive approach to feedback. The panel's shared ambition for economic growth across the North West helps focus the company's efforts and encourages effective organisation and delivery.

Over time, they have adapted to the panel's needs, with agendas now jointly set to provide both oversight and the opportunity to explore key issues in greater depth. Connections remain a top priority, as delays can significantly impact business expansion costs and ambitions. Regular, robust dialogue has underlined an openness and willingness to improve, **firmly positioning the panel as a valued partner in driving better performance.**

In relation to business plan commitments, they are largely on track, despite external challenges such as severe weather events that have affected resource availability. While meetings are typically held virtually, the annual in-person session is a highlight. At a recent meeting in Manchester, we reviewed their approach to fault management, capital investment plans, and flexible services— recognising the agile collaboration between teams to reinforce the network and meet future demand.

The panel values its role as a critical friend to SP Electricity North West, and engagement remains consistently positive. Despite the challenges faced, the company continues to show humility, transparency, and a genuine commitment to partnership—supported by the insight and expertise of the business leaders who volunteer their time on the panel."

Matt Stephenson, Chair of the Digital Futures Advisory Panel, said:

"The Digital Futures Advisory Panel has now completed its first full year. In that time, it has evolved into a forum that both supports and challenges the SP ENW technology team in equal measure. We've built a panel with a strong mix of skills and experience, and that diversity has sparked some truly thought-provoking and valuable discussions.

As Chair, I've been particularly pleased to see our feedback turn into tangible action. The SP Electricity North West team has responded positively, making meaningful changes to the Digital Strategy and Action Plan to make it more accessible, customer-focused, and better aligned with stakeholder needs. They've actively engaged in further discussions with us, particularly around AI adoption and Data Strategy.

Our expanded role in overseeing progress against business plan commitments has had real impact. On network sustainability, we've influenced thinking around the transition to a more flexible, low carbon 'digital grid', while keeping customer benefit at the forefront. On cyber security, we've helped reinforce the importance of embedding security by design from the outset.

Some of the highlights for me have included rich discussions on balancing innovation with the wide range of digital skills across the customer base. We've recognised that early adoption of technologies like AI, if not handled with care, risks leaving behind those who are less digitally confident. Other standout conversations have covered 'dig once' infrastructure planning and the geographic information system (GIS) modernisation programme—both excellent examples of the value of cross-sector collaboration.

Seeing the organisation adopt a 'you said, we did' approach to feeding back how our input has been used is a clear sign that the panel is valued—not just a tick-box exercise. We're actively helping shape how SP Electricity North West uses technology to deliver better outcomes for its customers."

Jenny Willis, Chair of our Consumer Vulnerability Oversight and Partnership Panels, said:

"The Consumer Vulnerability Advisory Panel comprises two groups – the Oversight Panel and the Partnership Panel.

The Oversight Panel is a smaller group with a remit to scrutinise performance against current business plan commitments, and provide strategic challenge and insight to inform future planning.

In 2024/25, the group **deepened its understanding of the monitoring methods and calculations behind the business commitment 'scorecard'** figures, enabling more robust scrutiny of RIIO-ED2 performance. Discussions also explored delivery trends and future planning priorities across North West communities, helping to identify where they should focus efforts for ED3 within the regional and regulatory context.

The Partnership Panel is made up of organisations working closely with SP Electricity North West to support customers across the licence area. Activities range from sharing information and promoting ECR sign-ups, to delivering targeted interventions—such as supporting those in fuel poverty, building resilience, and advising on LCTs.

During the year, the panel **reviewed progress on addressing ECR gaps and welcomed improvements,** with some previously high-gap areas now resolved through joint efforts. Members expressed interest in using current data to target future work and close remaining gaps. There was also a valuable discussion on how to equip customer-facing staff with person-centred, empathetic approaches when engaging with diverse customers. Partners shared real-world experience to inform their approach.

Trust emerged as a recurring theme across both panels. It was recognised as a cornerstone of effective engagement—critical to customers feeling able to accept support and key to building lasting relationships with partners. In campaigns like Take Charge, panel members acknowledged that trust may require multiple contacts before customers feel ready to act.

Some frustration was voiced over regulatory performance metrics that focus on customer numbers rather than recognising the value of sustained engagement and trust-building for long-term impact.

I feel privileged to work alongside panel members and SP ENW. Their shared commitment to learning, listening, and improving outcomes for communities across the region is truly commendable."

Todd Holden, Chair of our Environment & Sustainability Panel, said:

"Over the past year, our Environment and Sustainability Panel has maintained a robust schedule of quarterly meetings—held both virtually and in person at the University of Salford, including a valuable site visit to Joule House and Energy House 2.0.

The blend of long-standing and new panel members has fostered **nuanced stakeholder input and critical challenge,** helping SP Electricity North West accelerate meaningful progress across a **broad spectrum of environmental issues that matter deeply to customers.** This has been especially significant amidst a year marked by government change and a wave of new policy announcements poised to reshape the energy network landscape.

Several of our more deeply involved panel members, participating through subgroups, played active roles in the crafting of our current business plan commitments—most notably the Environmental Action Plan. Their **constructive scrutiny and challenge around key topics like biodiversity and carbon management have been instrumental,** and it is particularly gratifying to witness the tangible progress achieved in these areas.

Our discussions are always wide-ranging—covering everything from technical nuances to macro-level market trends. Yet it is often **discussions founded on shared challenges and mutual learning that yield the most impactful outcomes.** One memorable moment occurred during our in-person meeting in Salford, where a cautionary use case of telematic data illustrated how a well-intentioned energy-efficiency intervention was overshadowed by safety concerns—highlighting the necessity of maintaining dual-track approaches.

The panel also quickly identified the critical environmental risk posed by SF_6 leakage. This led to multiple sessions dedicated to deepening our understanding of this pressing issue. This ensured that **stakeholders were not only heard but issues acted upon.**

We continue to rigorously monitor progress. The panel reviews delivery against business plan commitments and the Environmental Action Plan every six months—tracking both year-end performance and cumulative progress over the plan's duration."

Andrew McIntosh, Chair of our DSO Stakeholder Panel, said:

SP Electricity North West's transparent, collaborative, and stakeholder-led approach is playing a vital role in accelerating decarbonisation across the North West and driving progress towards a fair, inclusive, and sustainable energy future. It has been enormously valuable for the DSO Stakeholder Panel to be part of the organisation's ongoing commitment to delivering meaningful DSO outcomes for customers and communities across the region. This engagement has not only strengthened trust and accountability, but also ensured that stakeholder priorities are reflected in decision-making, enabling more responsive, effective, and locally relevant solutions.

We invite you to join our expert advisory panels—your invaluable oversight, constructive feedback, and advocacy help shape our work.
To find out more, simply click here and get in touch with us.

5.2 Continuously improving our engagement

Engagement isn't a one-off—it's an ongoing journey. That's why our strategy, approach, and tactics all embrace change, ensuring we evolve in step with our customers and stakeholders.

We foster two-way dialogue at events, through surveys, round table discussionand benchmarking external best practices, which allows us to gather feedback and stay aligned with stakeholder needs. This mindset keeps our approach dynamic and responsive.

As laid out in our Stakeholder Engagement Strategy, we gauge success through this two-way dialogue—analysing stakeholder satisfaction surveys, post-event feedback, and growing stakeholder advocacy—which support both our regulatory submissions and overall business growth.

This year, we held our fifth **annual stakeholder satisfaction survey,** engaging 184 participants through telephone and online interviews. To maximise responses, and following previous IOG feedback, we extended the survey fieldwork to seven weeks, sent personal invitations to advisory panel members and shared an open survey link on LinkedIn and other social channels.

Overall satisfaction has improved. Advisory panel members report the strongest relationships, speak positively about us and see greater benefits from their participation compared to wider stakeholders. The most frequent engagement topics were network capacity and net zero (DSO-related), though stakeholders are keen for more focus on environment and sustainability. Engagement continues to be seen as meaningful, with stakeholders feeling able to share feedback openly and benefit from their involvement.

Stakeholders suggested several improvements

- Stronger communication on how feedback influences decisions, with a clear line of sight between input, delivery, and impact.
- Better internal coordination and clearer signposting to make it easier to access the right people and expertise.
- Greater transparency on planned projects, capacity updates, and long-term grid resilience.
- More engagement with local authorities across all tiers, including opportunities to bring them together to coordinate on shared challenges and goals.

Action that we've taken

Our engagement at the sub-regional council level provided a strong foundation, but we recognised the need to build deeper relationships with individual local authorities. In October 2024, we appointed a Stakeholder Engagement Manager dedicated to this work.

Earlier this year, we carried out independent research and hosted roundtable sessions with councils to explore how we can best support LAEP development. We then invited participants back to update them on how their feedback will shape our approach.

To ensure consistent, two-way collaboration, we are planning further tailored events for local authorities in Manchester and Kendal in September 2025 and a review and update of the dedicated local authority section on our website. These will demonstrate how input has influenced our decisions, help to align us on shared challenges, and identify new opportunities for collaboration.

This year we also created a new role, Capital Projects Communications Lead, to strengthen engagement on our capital investment programme, including our project pipeline, safety strategy, and communications.

We continue to sharpen the link between input, delivery, and impact. Our expanded 'You said, we did' reporting now covers all engagement panels and topics, and we have signposted examples throughout this year's annual report to show that we are listening and committed to openness and transparency.

Our satisfaction survey will return later this year—please look out for your invitation. Your candid feedback as a 'critical friend' is invaluable, and we welcome every opportunity to improve.

82% overall stakeholder satisfaction

89% overall satisfaction among advisory panel members

79% say engagement is meaningful

80% are engaged at least quarterly

6. Moving forward into 2025/26

Thank you for reading our review of engagement delivery and outcomes during 2024/25.

As part of our ongoing Stakeholder Engagement Strategy, we will continue to enhance what we do through a series of targeted actions:

- Continuing to improve accessibility to key contacts, subject matter experts and online information and accessible data sets.
- Encouraging stakeholders to engage strategically on longer-term business planning to inform our RIIO-ED2 business plan and efficient and timely network investment.
- Delivering a series of thematic webinars — including sessions on connections reform, flexibility services, and safety — to keep stakeholders informed and involved in shaping change.
- Co-creation and collaboration with partners and stakeholders to drive shared outcomes and collective impact.
- Sharing transparent reports and visual summaries (e.g 'You said, we did' infographics) to demonstrate impact and accountability.
- Embedding inclusion and fairness as guiding principles in everything we do.
- Enable engagement around our future Business Plan and ED3 requirements.

We remain alert, adaptable, and proud of our work as we continue collaborating closely with our stakeholders.

We invite you to join our expert advisory panels—your invaluable oversight, constructive feedback, and advocacy help shape our work.

To find out more, simply scan the QR code and get in touch with us.

Stephanie Trubshaw, Chief Operating Officer

Getting to know our region

Did you know?

Cumbria:

- Home to the Lake District, a UNESCO World Heritage Site that attracts 18m visitors a year.
- By area Cumbria makes up around two thirds of our region but only 10% by customer numbers.

Lancashire:

- Home to the largest aerospace cluster in Europe (and second largest in the world to the USA) which employs 14,000 people.
- Lancashire is home to around 30% of our customers.

Manchester:

- About 55% of our customers are in Greater Manchester.
- Almost 100,000 people now live in the city centre.
- Manchester has an economy of £80bn, larger than Wales. Since 2000, It has grown by 50% and has attracted the most direct foreign investment of any UK region over the past 10 years.
- Manchester is home to two of the world's most successful football clubs and has more official number one albums per capita than anywhere else.

Regionwide:

- SP Electricity North West has enough cables and lines to go around the world 1 ½ times.
- SP Electricity North West has the highest proportion of underground network outside London, with 79% of our network being underground cables.
- SP Electricity North West has over 200km of coastline.
- SP Electricity North West overlaps with three National Parks:
  - Lake District
  - Yorkshire Dales
  - Peak District
- And four Areas of Outstanding National Beauty:
  - Arnside and Silverdale
  - Solway Coast
  - Forest of Bowland
  - North Pennines.

SP Electricity North West
Borron Street, Portwood, Stockport, SK1 2JD
0800 195 41 41 www.enwl.co.uk

Stay connected...

SP Electricity North West Limited
Registered number 02366949

Helping you take charge

Inclusive Service Provision VERIFIED

recycle

SP Electricity North West