

Bringing energy to your door

Digitalisation Strategy Action Plan update December 2022

Leveraging digitalisation technology and digitised data to generate value for customers and stakeholders

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Note: This document has been produced after receiving our Final Determination. We are still analysing and assessing the detail of the Final Determination and will update our Digitalisation Strategy accordingly.

1 About Electricity North West

Electricity North West is one of 14 electricity distribution network operators (DNOs) in Great Britain. We are responsible for maintaining and upgrading 56,000km of network and nearly thousands of substations across the region. We supply the electricity to the diverse communities in the North West of England which extends from Macclesfield all the way up to Carlisle. We are regulated by the Office of Gas and Electricity Markets (Ofgem) who provide DNOs with the license to operate and decide what's fair for us to charge our customers for each price control period.

Our current price control began in 2015 and runs to March 2023. It's referred to as RIIO-ED1. In full, that stands for Revenue = Incentives + Innovation + Outputs, Electricity Distribution 1. Under this framework, the price we can charge our customers is determined until the start of the next price control, RIIO-ED2, which will run from 2023 until 2028. Work is already underway to determine RIIO-ED2, and this Digitalisation Strategy forms part of the stakeholder engagement that underpins the determination.

With the transition of the region to Net Zero underway, the period of time which the RIIO-ED2 price control covers will see significant change in the way electricity is generated, consumed and stored, driving innovation across the whole energy system both now and into the future. Notably it will increase the reliance by our consumers on the availability of electricity which, given the increasing reliance on digital systems to maximise the availability of the network, in turn increases the requirement on us to ensure availability of our systems, in conjunction with the ever increasing need to protect our systems against both more, and increasingly targeted and sophisticated, cyber-attack.

The move away from electricity being generated by large carbon and nuclear power stations connected to the National Grid has been underway for some time. Increasingly our power is being generated by renewable, but intermittent, sources connected to the distribution network. This is increasing the complexity of our network, with the need to balance generation and load not just at a national level, but at a local level too. This complexity is reflected in our need to make more of our information available to other stakeholders, so they also can help deliver this transition.

This complexity will only increase as the demand on our network increases to support low carbon technology, such as electric vehicles and heat pumps. Electricity North West has already responded to this trend. Firstly, by installing our own telecoms network during RIIO-ED1 and the previous regulatory period, to offer more control over our systems, crucially with less "latency" (the amount of time it takes to send commands over our network) in advance of the PSTN (Public Service Telephony Network) switch off in 2025. Secondly, during RIIO-ED1 we have updated our Network Management System (NMS) to become the core foundation of future control over and an increasingly automated and complicated system. On this foundation, we have now delivered our innovation, Customer Load Active Services System (CLASS - frequency management service to National Grid to help manage intermittency in the network) and are currently working to deliver another innovation, Smart Street (voltage control and electricity bill reduction for domestic customers).

Our Digitalisation Strategy for RIIO-ED2 and beyond is set to build upon this firm foundation. Significantly, we will be continuing our strategy of installing core systems fit for the future and building on these systems. Inevitably short-term stop-gap solutions deliver short-term advances, but at the expense of long-term progress, and potentially at the expense of support and reliability concerns. Our strategy is to utilise third party software platforms, encouraging the software developers of those systems to incorporate features specific to the UK DNO market into their core product, to make these available as industry platforms for all networks.

2 Welcome

Technology, information and data are taking on a greater significance at Electricity North West than ever before because of the need to:

- Further transform our businesses to drive efficiency and power innovation;
- Open-up our data to improve transparency and fuel innovation across the energy system;
- Support the road to Net Zero.

The growing importance of technology will also require us to bolster the cyber resilience of our network to reflect the bigger role of electricity in all our lives and an increasingly hostile "cyber" world.

Our Digitalisation Strategy and Action Plan is essential for our Business Plan by contributing to the delivery of the business plan benefits to create a more sustainable, fairer, more prosperous and more connected future for our region.

Additionally, it supports our work to implement the five recommendations of the Energy Data Taskforce and Ofgem's Data Best Practice, including openly sharing our data and the benefits to society that brings in areas such as whole energy system innovation and creating new market opportunities. Information Technology is one of the assets, along with our people, to help us achieve that goal.

Our transition to Net Zero requires new systems and processes to operate energy networks in a more sustainable future. These new systems and process are called Distribution System Operations (DSO) and are vital to our low carbon ambitions.

Investing in digitalisation, as described in our digitalisation vision, gives Electricity North West the ability to meet customer and stakeholder demands on the network and supports the journey to Net Zero, while further improving cyber protection and opening-up our data and increasing transparency.

We have an ambitious plan that puts our customers and stakeholders at the heart of everything we do.

Tony Smollett

Head of IT

3 Executive Summary

The essential service of electricity distribution that Electricity North West delivers needs to adapt. Net Zero targets necessitate adoption of low-carbon technologies, electric vehicles, and locally generated energy to be distributed, aligned with effective adoption of smart meters and distribution system operations. These changes will change electricity supply and demand patterns at a scale unimaginable when the network was designed and built.

To meet these new demands on our network and the resulting change in customer and stakeholder priorities and needs we have developed and published a Digitalisation Strategy. Our strategy describes the activities we will undertake in the next few years to deliver the necessary change.

This Action Plan provides a view of the activities we will undertake during this six-month period.

We have significantly revised both our governance of the Digitalisation Action Plan (DAP) and our approach to its development based on Ofgem's revised principles.

Our approach now focuses on customer and stakeholder feedback and benefits.

A key foundation for our Digitalisation Strategy is data. We have produced a Data Strategy that describes streams of activity that will be delivered in adherence with the Data Best Practices issued by Ofgem.

We have enhanced our published Action Plan to incorporate the initiatives and projects required to align our focus to the seven guiding principles. Whilst these principles are subject to consultation and feedback we believe they are not likely to undergo significant change.

The key principles are as follows:

- 1. **Prioritising stakeholder benefits** Prioritise providing benefits to the stakeholders who pay for the products and services and also benefits to the broader Public Interest.
- 2. Delivering the vision Ensure all products and services work towards a defined vision.
- 3. **Time to market** Take full advantage of opportunities to deliver benefits early and to iterate improvements to products and services.
- 4. **Communicating what we do** Make it easy to understand the products and services, the status of their delivery and how to access them.
- 5. **Communicating delivery status** Ensure visibility about the nature and status of actions in the Digitalisation Action Plan.
- 6. **Measuring success** There is a shared understanding of success and performance is measured.
- 7. Whole system collaboration Coordinate with the wider ecosystem of products and services.

Our Digitalisation Strategy Action Plan includes the following: Stakeholder engagement model, Contribution to our Business Plan Vision, Digitalisation Strategy on a Page and Digitalisation actions.

This document is complemented by the following strategy documents;

- Annex G.10 Cyber Resilience Plan which outlines at a high-level our Operational Technology (OT) and Corporate IT Cyber Investment Plans. Link
- Annex G.21 Data Strategy which shows in how we will implement the Energy Data Taskforce (EDTF) recommendation and Ofgem's Data Best Practice. <u>Link</u>
- Annex G.23 Digitalisation Strategy which provides our digital vision for RIIO-ED2 and how we will deliver the vision in support of our business plan. Link

4 Stakeholder Engagement

Our strategy for managing our stakeholders is based on our wider engagement model. This is outlined in the diagram below:



5 Contribution to our Business Plan Vision

Our Digitalisation Strategy is aligned to the objectives and action plans of the business plan as well as external influences such as Data Best Practice (DBP) and Digitalisation Strategy and Action Plan (DSAP) guidance and the Energy Data Task Force (EDTF) as well as the requirements of external customers and stakeholders.



We plan to continue to deliver network reliability and security, excellent service and efficient operations by building on our core services and exploiting new and maturing digital technologies. These are changing the way companies interact and work with their customers and stakeholders while recognising that some customer segments have digital accessibility challenges.

For our customers and stakeholders, this will mean increased availability of data and transparency through improved digital services informed by enhanced engagement, which in turn will support market innovation, energy supply chain efficiency and economic growth.

Our customers have a large part to play in shaping and delivering our digitalisation strategy. We will work together to provide improved digital services, taking particular care to avoid excluding customers without digital accessibility or with other particular needs, and open access to network and market information.

We have developed a continuous improvement process that will refine and confirm our digitalisation journey. Through the engagement undertaken with customers and stakeholders while preparing our RIIO-ED2 submission we have focused on the opportunities and projects that provide the best stakeholder outcomes. We are in a process of exploration and consideration not least as the technology evolves. We are asking ourselves questions as to how best to address the challenges being posed. We aim to be open and transparent in this process and we want and need stakeholders to help

us decide what we do recognising, that we need to remain agile in this fast-changing dynamic digital world.

The initiatives outlined in this strategy are what we could do in RIIO-ED2. We will continue to refine this as we undertake more detailed planning, cost benefit analysis and consultation as part of finalising an investment plan for RIIO-ED2 that is affordable, deliverable and optimally aligned to our stakeholders' priorities and the 10 business plan benefits (as detailed above).

5.1 Our Digital Vision

Digitalisation is the process of leveraging technology that uses digitised data and information in order to transform and automate business processes and create additional value for customers and stakeholders.

The three main new capability themes that underpin our digitalisation are:

• Enablement – Providing access to data and appropriate technology in the right place at the right time to enable our people to work more safely and efficiently, to improve public safety, and to better serve our customers and stakeholders.

We will deliver systems that support business change that transforms processes and permits continuous improvement. By improving processes, we improve efficiency, reduce data errors and provide working environments that are in keeping with the expectations of current and future employees, making Electricity North West a more fulfilling place to work. We will do this to improve customer experience to support the EDTF recommendations, DSO market innovation, Net Zero, energy supply chain efficiency and economic growth.

• Innovation – Enabling the company and the supply chain to adapt quickly to changes in the operating environment and to innovate by continuing to invest in flexible technology platforms, data quality and data sharing.

We will allow and support other stakeholders innovating by sharing appropriate data and delivering the EDTF recommendations. We will do this with a view to speeding up the realisation of those benefits to our customer and stakeholders, but to do so in a manner which allows future technological change.

• Insight – Information and analytics accessed in an affordable, secure and reliable manner, to enable us, as well as third parties, to identify opportunities to innovate and continually improve the whole energy system.

This includes collecting more data where appropriate, avoiding personal data at all times where possible, and integrating both the data we already hold and that provided by third parties (such as smart meter data, public data and data from suppliers), as well as enhancing our ability to analyse that data through the application of data science, operational modelling and electrical network modelling.

We will further improve how our digital services create value for the company, its customers and its stakeholders, either directly or through third parties. To deliver this strategy successfully we need to upskill our staff and ensure we can govern our strategy.

6 Our Digitalisation Strategy on a page

Digitalisation Strategy Leading the North West to Net Zero

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7 Digitalisation Actions

Here is a summary of Digitalisation actions, these actions are broken down by our investment areas and the primary principle they support.

As part of our response top Storm Arwen, we have prioritised new requirements to deliver benefit for stakeholders and customers, this has resulted in other actions been delayed.

Area	Action	To December 2022	To June 2023	Status	Principle
Governance	We will respond to the RIIO-ED2 draft determination to ensure we get the best outcome for our customers.	Responded to the RIIO-ED2 draft determination, which resulted in an increase in our allowance.	No further action required.	Complete	Principle 7 - Whole system collaboration
Market Operations	Delivering capability to enable customer and consumers to do "next day" supplier switching. (Faster switching).	Service went live in July 2022.	No further action required.	Complete	Principle 7 - Whole system collaboration
Smart Grid System	Enhancement to our fault response, from an output learning from Storm Arwen, introducing functionality to associate customer reported incidents to network assets.	Initial enhancement has been deployed and refined. This will be delivered into production by end of December 2022	No further action required.	Complete	Principle 1 - Prioritising Stakeholder benefits
Smart Grid System	Trial of our Smart meter ping proof of concept to look to establish if a customer has power, to avoid out of hours restoration call backs for customers.	Process has been embedded and capability in use.	No further action required.	Complete	Principle 1 - Prioritising Stakeholder benefits
Smart Meter	Deployed a Smart meter ping tool Proof of Concept, to support No supply calls. This was trialled in our Contact Centre and early indication shows a reduction in unnecessary engineer visits, because Contact Centre teams can determine whether the problem is with the electricity supply or the customer's premises.	The Proof of Concept (PoC) has been undertaken successfully, and findings are learnings from this PoC are being used to create a business case for the next phase.	No further action required.	Complete	Principle 1 - Prioritising Stakeholder benefits

Area	Action	To December 2022	To June 2023	Status	Principle
Customer	Creation of report a damage functionality on our website. Customers will be able to report a damage or hazard to us (damaged cables, damaged pole, pole down etc) through our website using geolocation to capture their location and submit a form to us.	Form has been developed and the capability to provide a location of the damage is scheduled to be deployed by end of December 2022.	Investigate and prioritise continuous service improvements based on feedback.	Accelerated	Principle 1 - Prioritising Stakeholder benefits
Customer	We have updated our net zero area of our website, so businesses have more information on how to decarbonise.	Bespoke 'net zero for business' area of the website set up (September 2022) Grants and incentives page – complete (September 2022). Detailed information on how to 'take action' to be complete by December 2022.	Continuous review and improvement to ensure content is up-to-date and relevant.	On track	Principle 1 - Prioritising Stakeholder benefits
Customer and Smart Meter	Complete Cost Benefits Analysis and business case for our Smart meter ping tool, to support No supply	Analysis undertaken to undertaking how the benefits can be realised and produced a business case to deliver them for three key areas, our website, call centre and Network Management system.	Commence the implementation of the production services, once approval is given.	On track	Principle 1 - Prioritising Stakeholder benefits
Enterprise Resource Planning and Connections	Enhance capabilities to collaborate with Housing Associations to support their Low Carbon ambitions.	Business case preparation to secure funding ongoing.	Approval of business case.	On track	Principle 2 - Delivering the vision

Area	Action	To December 2022	To June 2023	Status	Principle
Geographical Information Systems	Deploy a Proof of Concept, testing and refining the requirements for our GIS platform.	Requirements for the Proof of Concept have been gathered and high-level success criteria identified.	Select GIS application vendor for the programme. Deploy Proof of Concept and trialling and testing the complexities of moving to new service.	On track	Principle 2 - Delivering the vision
Governance	Improve collaboration across the energy system to create a consolidated approach regionally and nationally.	Attended industry forums Data and Digital Steering Group (DDSG) and licence drafting sessions with peers.	Licence conditions should be concluded and complete.	On track	Principle 7 - Whole system collaboration
Governance	Sourcing procurement frameworks for RIIO-ED2 enhancing our responsiveness and move quicker with framework partners to deliver services.	Finalising and onboarding our frameworks for RIIO- ED2. enhancing our responsiveness and move quicker with framework partners to deliver services.	Establishing and defining collaborative and effective ways of working with our framework partners.	On track	Principle 3 – Time to market
Governance	Update Digitalisation Strategy, as per our licence obligation.	Digitalisation Action. Plan for December 2022.	Update to our Digitalisation Strategy for March 2023 and our Digitalisation Action Plan for June 2023.	On track	Principle 5 - Communicating delivery status
Innovation	Building the market for our BiTrader innovation project. The focus is to engage with the customers, find out their requirements and feedback on how they would like this to operate and begin early stages of design.	Work has commenced on the design and requirements gathering phase.	Following Requirements Gathering, Design and Implementation will take place.	On track	Principle 2 - Delivering the vision

Area	Action	To December 2022	To June 2023	Status	Principle
Market Operations	Commence activities to Half hourly billing, enables more timely and accurate information, supplier to set pricing based on demand	Initial business case approved but will need to be revised to meet baselined Elexon programme requirements (November 2022). Industry requirements baselined November 2022 but still subject to significant work-off plans. MPRS interface design completed. MPRS (vendor) build and test commenced.	Commence activity to build and test our interface from January 2023.	On track	Principle 7 - Whole system collaboration
Work Asset Management	Continuous improvement and digitalisation of our Work and Asset Management systems, in three key areas: - Work management and Mobile - Asset register - Capital programme	Enhancements to our Storm recce process, we've improved the way capture information for our colleagues and the management of how we record damages from Storms.	Improving our mechanism of information capture for our fleet vehicles and enhancements to our reporting. - Digitalisation our process for management of our tooling - We're going to improve our information capture methods for keys assets, improving the experience for our colleagues and we'll get richer information.	On track	Principle 1 - Prioritising Stakeholder benefits
Complementary and Specialised Systems	Enhance our digital training capability for our colleagues - providing a modern e-learning platform to support our digital transformation	Trial of capability to complete by end of December 2022	Capability rolled out to all colleagues by Spring 2023	On going	Principle 3 – Time to market

Area	Action	To December 2022	To June 2023	Status	Principle
Customer	Accessibility improvements to our website for sign language.	Two videos that have been produced by the Royal Association for Deaf People - First one is about Priority Service Register (PSR), and the 2nd covers off high level energy saving support and PSR.	Videos to be finalised and published to our website, in January 2023.	On going	Principle 1 - Prioritising Stakeholder benefits
Customer	Enhance our processing of stakeholder data to provide tailored communications and services to stakeholders	Our new Stakeholder engagement service was switched on in October 2022.	Test new platform with stakeholders - mail out first survey, corporate newsletter and run a stakeholder event using the platform.	On going	Principle 1 - Prioritising Stakeholder benefits
Customer	Updated our Priority services webpages, to support our stakeholder's impact by the cost-of- living crisis, providing help locating foodbanks, warm hubs and energy saving support. This improves the relevance of our information and support for our vulnerable customers.	Updates made to our website to support customers impacted by the cost-of-living crisis.	Continuous improvement based on stakeholder requirements and feedback.	On going	Principle 1 - Prioritising Stakeholder benefits

Area	Action	To December 2022	To June 2023	Status	Principle
Customer	 #Energy Explained. Our latest venture will see us sharing information with our social media followers in a series of Facebook Live sessions, project name #EnergyExplained. The first session will cover energy costs and the energy price guarantee. The sessions will be live and open to questions from the public, Citizens Advice will be the experts answering the question. The sessions will then be downloaded and saved onto our webpage. 	Sessions have been developed for our social media, ready for hosting in the next period.	Host and run multiple sessions, via different social media channels, for our stakeholders to attend. We will evaluate the effectiveness of the communication over these channels, through this period.	On going	Principle 1 - Prioritising Stakeholder benefits
Customer	Priority Service Register (PSR) Single Portal - Electricity North West and United Utilities along with CAM have commenced a pilot scheme to measure the customer experience of signing onto one Priority Service Register.	Pilot phase commenced in October 2022, and we'll be reviewing the effectiveness of using our 3 rd party portal for PSR data processing.	Review the feedback from the pilot and feed into the National requirements for a single Portal for PSR.	On going	Principle 1 - Prioritising Stakeholder benefits
Customer	Continued improvement of our Community and Local Energy web content, based on stakeholder feedback.	Continued improvement of our Community and Local Energy web content, based on stakeholder feedback.	Continued improvement of our Community and Local Energy web content, based on stakeholder feedback.	On going	Principle 1 - Prioritising Stakeholder benefits

Area	Action	To December 2022	To June 2023	Status	Principle
Data, Analytics and Integration Platform	Improvements to our Management Information reporting service, making it more reliable and more efficient for our colleagues	Commenced activity and a cloud service has been readied, for migration of our reporting services.	Migration of information and reports to the improved service, to realise benefits in reliability, security and performance.	On going	Principle 2 - Delivering the vision
Geographical Information Systems	Deploy our Open Data Portal, this portal will enable stakeholders to view our asset data.	Design underway.	Work underway to enable us to share our Embedded Capacity Register (ECR), via an API and portal. Migrate additional Open Data sets to the Open Data portal.	On going	Principle 7 - Whole system collaboration
Governance	Create consolidated externally facing service catalogue with all our external facing services: -ranging from Planned Supply Interruptions (PSI) and Supplier Checker Service.	No action.	Create consolidated externally facing service catalogue with all our external facing services: - ranging from Planned Supply Interruptions (PSI) and Supplier Checker Service (Deferred)	On going	Principle 4 - Communicating what we do
Governance	Agreed initial metrics for each Digital Service in place	No action.	Agree initial metrics for each Digital Service in place (Deferred)	On going	Principle 6 - Measuring success
Governance	Workforce and training plan to enhance our digital capabilities	Microsoft cloud training, SCRUM master and Agile project management training has been undertaken.	Explore opportunities for Power BI training.	On going	Principle 3 – Time to market
Governance	Create interactive drillable chart on the actions.	Activity has commenced to select a tool to deliver our interactive plan.	Deploy drillable, interactive planning tool and populate with our action list. (Deferred)	On going	Principle 5 - Communicating delivery status

Area	Action	To December 2022	To June 2023	Status	Principle
Governance	Publish an external facing data catalogue, listing our available data sets.	Preparation for enhancing our catalogue with industry standard, Dublin-core metadata structure, to improve searchability of our available data sets for stakeholders.	Publish the updated and enhanced version of our catalogue to our website.	On going	Principle 7 - Whole system collaboration
Operational Telecommunications	Enhancing our Digital communications capability to provide communications to our hard-to-reach mobile signal areas, helping us improve control over our network and increasing our resilience.	Activity has been delayed.	Commence the deployment of the enhancements.	On going	Principle 2 - Delivering the vision
Smart Grid System	The first phase of our Smart Street, introducing low voltage regulation to support the reduction in demand on the network and cost to customers.	Initial round of testing has been undertaken and refinements identified.	This will be delivered to our production environments by April 2023	On going	Principle 1 - Prioritising Stakeholder benefits

Area	Action	To December 2022	To June 2023	Status	Principle
Work Asset Management	Enhancing our process to submit information from the field for faults, capturing more information that will support improved customer engagement.	Rollout to our field teams has started and will complete in January 2023	Finish the rollout to our field teams.	On going	Principle 1 - Prioritising Stakeholder benefits
Smart Grid System	Improved fault location detection for overhead lines, improving safety and fault response.	Deferred, implementation delayed.	Deferred, implementation delayed.	Delayed	Principle 1 - Prioritising Stakeholder benefits
Complementary and Specialised Systems	Enhancing integration between our applicant management system and our ERP (Enterprise Resource Planning), to improve our efficiency.	Deprioritised pending strategy review.	To feed into our RIIO-ED2 planning	On hold	Principle 2 - Delivering the vision
Complementary and Specialised Systems	Enhancement and further digitalisation of our authorisations, through our e-learning portal.	Paused due to analysis of current solution direction versus inclusion in future Health & Safety system.	To feed into our RIIO-ED2 planning	On hold	Principle 2 - Delivering the vision
Customer	Enhance our chat bot based on stakeholder feedback. Increased its visibility on our website and updated the content to support increased self- service.	Deprioritised, due to Storm Arwen actions.	To feed into our RIIO-ED2 planning	On hold	Principle 4 - Communicating what we do

Area	Action	To December 2022	To June 2023	Status	Principle
Customer	Deployment of a general enquiries portal to enable greater self-service for case tracking.	Deprioritised due to Storm Arwen actions.	To feed into our RIIO-ED2 planning	On hold	Principle 1 - Prioritising Stakeholder benefits
Governance	Changes to our business case process to track and report DAP actions, so we can monitor and report on the delivery status of these actions.	No action.	Changes to our business case process to track and report DAP actions, so we can monitor and report on the delivery status of these actions.	On hold	Principle 4 - Communicating what we do

8 How are we progressing digitally?

Here are our metrics for our digitalisation progress in the last 12 months.

Digital metric	To December 2022
Our move to cloud	16
What capabilities have we moved to the cloud, providing us more agility in improving the services we offer.	
Our open data sets	15
How many of our data sets have we made open for access and use by our stakeholders.	