

SP ENW DSO Stakeholder Panel

Meeting notes – 8 July 2026

Present:	Andrew McIntosh (AMc), Greg Dodd (GD), Matt Fawcett (MF), Kate Gilmartin (KG), James Johnson (JJ)
In attendance:	Paul Auckland (PA), Gerry Boyd (GB) Helen Daly (HD), Stuart Dearden (SD), Katherine Horne (KH), Kate Rogers (KR), Tom Royle (TR)
Apologies:	Greg Dodd, Jonathan Edwards, Daniel Heery, Debbie King, Craig Morley, Jamie Shaw-Stewart

Welcome and conflicts declaration

AMc welcomed all attendees and apologies were noted.

No new conflicts of interest were declared.

Standing items - review of actions

The action log was reviewed, and updates given on the outstanding actions.

Standing items – Business and ISG update

PA shared some additional details of the combined SP ENW and SPEN ISG and shared the businesses' initial thinking about future plans for the SP ENW and SPEN DSO panels. It was noted that this was early stage thinking and that feedback was being sought to shape the final model.

Panel members shared their initial feedback on the proposals, noting the proposals could create a more complete approach, covering both technical assurance and stakeholder feedback with more opportunities for sharing best practice and broader collaboration. It was also noted that there would naturally be crossover between the two groups as stakeholder and technical perspective will both provide value on many issues. Issues raised for further consideration included ensuring coverage across the wider geographical footprint and local government stakeholders, and the opportunity to widen stakeholder representation in some sectors.

It was agreed that SP ENW and SPEN would develop their thinking further over the coming months and share an updated proposal with the panel at the next meeting. In the interim panel members absent from this meeting would be invited to provide feedback on the initial proposals shared at this session. **Action: SP ENW to request additional feedback from panel members not present and provide an updated proposal for discussion in September**

Session theme 1 – DSO and ED3

GB introduced himself to the panel and gave a summary of SPEN and SP ENW's current position in terms of how the two DSOs will be working together to converge over the remainder of the regulatory period. As part of this convergence the teams will be working together to develop a combined DSO strategy for ED3, with the respective DSO panels being asked to contribute stakeholder and technical insight throughout the process.

GB summarised the key DSO developments as set out in Ofgem's Sector Specific Methodology Decision published at the end of May before moving on to explain in more detail the expectations for DSO functionality as set out in the SMD and businesses plan guidance.

GB confirmed that the first draft of the DSO Annex would be available at the end of the July, and panel members would be asked for their thoughts on this. It was noted that this fell over the summer holiday period and might prove challenging for some panel members. GB confirmed that stakeholders would also have the opportunity to contribute to the plan via engagement events over the coming months.

It was agreed that SPEN would revert to the panel with a clearer review timetable for the DSO Annex. **Action: GB**

Panel members expressed concerns around the increasing volume of energy-related data being directed towards local authorities, and there was agreement from GB and PA that coordination, forecasting visibility and shore-system planning will be key areas of future DSO activity.

Panel members also raised concerns about how stakeholder feedback ultimately flows through the regulatory process, noting that Ofgem could potentially reject or significantly modify plans despite strong stakeholder support. Panel members also questioned how emerging priorities can be incorporated into DSO plans when details emerge later in the price control process. GB noted that the ED3 price control will include mechanisms to address uncertainty.

It was agreed that a further discussion on the following topics would be helpful:

- Coordination of energy data and planning assumptions.
- The DSO's role in supporting local authorities and local energy planning.
- How NESO, Ofgem and stakeholders interact within the planning process.
- The impact of future national priorities and strategic programmes.
- The distinction between baseline investment and uncertainty mechanisms within ED3.
- Future load planning and network reinforcement requirements.

Action: HD to arrange

Standing items – industry issues

Topics raised by panel members under industry issues included:

- Government policy and regulatory uncertainty
- Devolution and local energy system governance
- Connections reform, demand connection challenges and capacity constraints
- Plug-in solar adoption and associated safety considerations
- The impact of IDNO networks on DSO activities
- Updates on DSO innovation and examples of best practice from across the industry

Action: HD to add sessions on connections reform, IDNO activity, and innovation to future panel agendas

Standing items – Communications and stakeholder engagement

KR shared the results of the recent DSO Stakeholder Satisfaction Survey noting that SP ENW's score had improved from 8.86 in 2024/25 to 9.23 in 2025/26. Panel members were thanked for their support.

KR also shared forthcoming communications and stakeholder engagement initiatives and events, including a series of social DSO fund videos, solar for schools launch and connections and flexibility webinars. Panel members were also asked to provide feedback on potential topic themes for SP ENW's forthcoming autumn conference.

Panel members encouraged SP ENW to continue with the format of breakout sessions to allow for more in-depth conversations with stakeholders, and also the use of free-text voting apps to allow for more interactivity during the presentation-based sessions.

Standing items – DSO delivery

PA shared the questions recently received from Ofgem in advance of SP ENW's performance panel interview on 15 July. The draft presentation was also shared with the panel, while noting that they had not had the opportunity to review it due to the short timescale between the questions landing and the deadline for sharing material with the Ofgem panel.

KH then shared an update on recent social DSO activity, including the launch of round 3 of the social DSO fund which is now open and will close on 17 July. She noted that the fund is evolving to focus on projects that can be scaled and deliver wider system benefits. Applications will be assessed over the summer, with awards expected to be announced in early September. Alongside this KH was carrying out a portfolio fairness assessment, as set out in the fund's governance documentation, to ensure that social DSO investments are reaching communities most affected by the energy transition.

Other items of note included a community flexibility pilot expected to run over the summer where KH will be supporting a small number of community organisations to access SP ENW's local flexibility market, and an update on the EnergyCloud – Irwell Homes trial, with full results expected in September 2026.

The panel welcomed the progress made through EnergyCloud and suggested there could be significant opportunities to scale the model through registered providers and housing associations. Discussion points involved the potential to reduce residents' energy costs at scale, opportunities to share learning across housing providers through GMHP networks and the ability of large housing organisations to deploy solutions more quickly and at greater scale. It was noted that the current voucher-system of payment to participants was a barrier to wider participation but that this was something that EnergyCloud was actively looking to resolve and a solution was expected to be imminent. It was agreed that KH would provide a further update at the next panel session with a view to considering further the opportunities for scaling up. **Action: KH**

KH also confirmed that SP ENW was working with stakeholders to develop its response to the DESNZ community batteries call for evidence due at the end of July. This would be shared with the panel once approved. **Action: KH**

JJ shared details of the Battery Box project run by AMP Clean Energy working with local authorities and it was agreed that KH and JJ would discuss this further. **Action: KH/JJ**

Session theme 2 – DSO KPIs

SD gave a recap of previous conversations with and feedback from the panel on SP ENW's DSO KPIs. He shared the proposed KPIs and target for 202/26, highlighting the addition of 6 new KPIs. It was noted that the target for deferred reinforcement was a significant increase on the 2025/26 target, reflecting greater confidence in the flexibility market. It was also noted that the methodology for setting the flexibility connections target had been refined to be better aligned with the flexible connections pipeline and, although lower than the prior year, this was considered a more realistic target which would still deliver significant benefits to customers. It was also noted that the AMN connections target had been reduced, again based on the known connections pipeline for the current regulatory year. The panel was asked to consider whether a KPI based on AMN connections offered would be a more useful KPI. **Action: Panel members to consider and provide feedback to HD/SD**

Standing items – Panel forward plan

The forward plan in the meeting pack was noted.

AOB and close

AMc thanked panel members and SP ENW for their time and contribution to the meeting. The next meeting was scheduled for 9 September 2026.