SP ENW DSO Stakeholder Panel

Meeting notes – 9 September 2026

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

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

HD provided an update on the proposed future DSO panels, following the decision to develop a joint ED3 business plan across the SPEN and ENWL licence areas. The proposal remains to establish a stakeholder panel and a technical panel, each covering all three licence areas. A gap analysis was shared for each panel. Panel members welcomed the gap analysis and provided several suggestions to broaden representation on both. **Action: SP ENW to consider**

Panel members were broadly supportive of maintaining a distinction between stakeholder and technical functions. It was noted that some panel members were less comfortable contributing to highly technical discussions or being asked to review technical documents beyond their specialist expertise, preferring a clearer focus on strategic stakeholder matters and community and consumer outcomes.

Concerns were raised around potential duplication of effort and missing opportunities for stakeholder members to participate in deeper technical discussions. It was agreed that these concerns would be kept under review and that the option for joint meetings for strategic topics, or for stakeholder members to join certain technical discussions would be considered.

It was agreed that SP ENW would consider this feedback as part of the terms of reference drafting and that the proposed terms would be shared with the panel for feedback in the coming weeks. **Action: SP ENW**

Session theme 1 – ED3 DSO annex

An update was provided on preparation of the ED3 DSO Annex and supporting business plan documentation. It was noted that the Annex must satisfy approximately 72 Ofgem requirements in the areas of network planning, network operations, voltage management, losses optimisation and flexibility market development. An initial compliance review had been undertaken on the draft

document, and the current focus was on improving stakeholder evidence, consumer outcomes and benefits articulation.

Panel members welcomed the opportunity to review the annex, with a view to assessing whether stakeholder feedback is accurately reflected, whether the strategy is understandable and coherent and whether proposed outcomes are clear and meaningful for consumers.

Panel discussion centred on the implications of creating a single DSO strategy across all licence areas. Panel members noted the increasing political focus on devolution could make it important to maintain visibility of local and regional differences in the future and emphasised the importance of:

- Maintaining regional accountability,
- Ensuring stakeholder engagement remains locally relevant despite business integration, and
- Demonstrating what customers will receive from DSO investment and how investments translate into measurable outcomes.

It was noted that that the draft annex was currently subject to internal review and would be circulated to the panel within the coming week. **Action: SP ENW**

Session theme 2 – Load-related expenditure

As requested by the panel at its previous meeting, SD set out the high-level detail behind the development of the ED3 load investment plan highlighting DNO and stakeholder inputs, interactions with NESO and the outputs that feed into the ED3 load investment submission detail. He also explained the various funding mechanisms available to DNOs, and how they are aligned to varying degrees of certainly of need.

The panel suggested that it would be useful to understand more about the SEN assessment methodology, how project plausibility and confidence levels were assessed and how contingent funding would be accessed. **Action: SP ENW**

The panel also discussed the increasing role of flexibility and how this was incorporated into SP ENW's investment planning and its "build and flex" strategy, as well as the impact of increased EV adoption, increased use of air conditioning and the emergence of plug-in solar PV on voltage management and network planning.

Standing items – industry issues

Key topics discussed:

Government and devolution agenda
The panel discussed whether greater devolution may increase expectations around regional reporting and benefit tracking, and that future reporting may need to demonstrate economic impacts, community benefits and consumer outcomes at a much more regional level than historically required.

Community energy
The panel discussed the significance of the P441 BSC modification, and the increasing influence of large market participants and the associated impact on networks.

Data centres
The panel noted proposed changes around queue management and commencement fees.

Standing items – Communications and stakeholder engagement

KR reminded the panel of the SP ENW DSO conference in October and shared details of the keynote speakers as well as other forthcoming communications and stakeholder engagement initiatives and events.

Panel members were also updated on the feedback received as part of SP ENW's recent ODMF consultation and the changes that were being made as a result.

A summary of the summer 2026 flexibility tender was also shared, noting that a full update would be provided in November after contracts had been awarded.

Standing items – DSO delivery

PA provided an update on SP ENW's recent score received from the Ofgem DSO Performance Panel, noting that this represented a 20% increase over the past two years. Panel members were thanked for their continued commitment, support and challenge. Ofgem's full report with a full breakdown of the scores for each area, and detailed feedback, was expected by the end of September and a further update would be shared with the panel thereafter.

DH recused himself for the next agenda item.

KH then shared an update on recent social DSO activity, including the current status of round three of the social DSO fund and the fairness assessment that had been carried out following completion of the round two funding process.

It was noted that the funding applications for round three exceeded the remaining ED2 funding allocation. The panel was asked to consider whether all the funding should be allocated in round three, or whether some should be retained for a final round in 2027/28. The panel was also asked to consider the possibility of SP ENW partnering with other funding sources. After discussion it was agreed that the panel was broadly supportive of allocating the full amount now, subject to confirmation that SP ENW and CM were comfortable with the quality of the existing allocations, and also the outcomes of scheduled discussions with potential funding partners. **Action: KH to provide panel members with further information in due course**

In terms of the fairness assessment, the panel agreed that there were no material fairness concerns identified, noting that the geographical distribution of funding was broadly representative of population distribution across the region and that funding was reaching more deprived communities. The Panel expressed an interest in how funded projects were subsequently tracked projects and it was agreed that an update would be given at the next panel meeting. **Action: KH**

Session theme 3 – Governance update

HD delivered the scheduled six-monthly update on the conflicts of interest risk register actions. It was noted that all actions were on schedule and no concerns were raised by the panel. The register is kept under regular review by SP ENW and will next be reviewed by the panel in March 2027.

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 4 November 2026.