



SSEN DSO ADVISORY BOARD ANNUAL REPORT

April 2025 – March 2026

20th March 2026



Scottish & Southern
Electricity Networks

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THE ADVISORY BOARD

Creation & membership

Now at the conclusion of its second full year, the Scottish and Southern Electricity Networks Distribution System Operator (SSEN DSO) Advisory Board was set up, in April 2024, to provide independent, strategic and constructive advice to the SSEN DSO so that it delivers its plans in the interests of all its stakeholders.

In constituting the Board, SSEN DSO identified the need to source a range of expertise and experience in the following areas:

- Consumer Customer advocacy including how the needs of the vulnerable can be met
- Consumer Customer policy and economic regulation, including outcome-based incentives and performance monitoring of targets and commitments.
- Leadership role in a network business, operating under a regulatory framework.
- Environmental sustainability and decarbonisation and the application in a business context
- Local Authority policy, planning and decision making
- Data and Digital in context of Energy
- Smart systems design and Community renewables
- Evaluation of customer value, efficiency, societal value benefits

Each member was appointed in April 2024, via a competitive and open recruitment process, run by SSEN DSO.

The resulting Board is diverse, and is comprised of the following members:

Member	Role	Background
Gareth Miller	Independent Chair	Energy investment, policy making, research and consulting
Dr Nicki Clegg	Independent Member	DNO, Data architecture, digital transformation and technology
Bridget Hartley	Independent Member	Regional energy planning, gas transmission/distribution
Dr Charlotte Johnson	Independent Member	Energy research, policy, innovation, customer advocacy fairness and equity, societal benefits
Dr Dan Roberts	Independent Member	Energy economics and economic regulation/incentives, policy and consulting
Professor Jan Webb	Independent Member	Energy research, policy, regional/local energy planning and decarbonisation



Summary terms of reference

In the interests of transparency, a redacted version of the SSEN DSO Advisory Board Terms of Reference (ToR) are published [online](#)¹. In summary:

Key term	Description
Purpose	The purpose of the SSEN DSO Advisory Board is to perform independent customer focussed scrutiny and challenge. The Board critically assures methodologies, decisions and approaches, and interrogates associated levels of transparency.
Independence	To ensure independence, none of the members have direct or indirect employment, or material business links with SSEN
Matters for consideration	The key matters that the Board focusses on are: 1) The pace, effectiveness and timeliness of SSEN’s DSO delivery plans and DSO operational decision-making methodologies on a quarterly basis. 2) Assurance of the approach undertaken for, and the conclusions contained in, SSEN’s DSO annual independent audit of the transparency of our operations and their Distribution Network Options Assessments (DNOA) outcomes. 3) Critical assessment of how SSEN are meeting their four DSO priorities: i) Forecasting and planning future needs, ii) Developing an inclusive flexibility marketplace iii) Delivering network flexibility at scale iv) Driving transparency and coordination 4) A continuous examination of whether actions taken are locally reflective, widen participation and support vulnerable customers.
Out of scope	The SSEN DSO Advisory Board does not conduct in-depth scrutiny and challenge of day-to-day performance that is monitored by Ofgem.
Transparency	Transparency is assured in two ways: 1) The SSEN DSO Advisory Board chair (with the support of members) will prepare an end of year report that provides a summary of the issues considered, and the advice given, by the SSEN DSO Advisory Board, which in turn helps to support further scrutiny and accountability. 2) The DSO Advisory Board will publish a summary note of meetings (with any confidential and/or commercially sensitive information redacted) as soon as practicably possible after a meeting has taken place, on the DSO Advisory Board website.
Continuous Improvement	The SSEN DSO Advisory Board shall be responsible for periodic reviews (at least annually) of its own operational performance and, at least annually with the Director or DSO and Director of Corporate Affairs, the Chair will conduct a review against the Terms of Reference.

¹ <https://www.ssen.co.uk/globalassets/about-us/dso/publication--reports/dso-advisory-board.pdf>



Ways of working

During 2025, the Board’s ways of working continued to mature. There has been a more structured programme of pre-meeting preparation, deeper engagement with SSEN DSO’s directorates. There has also been a clearer alignment between the Advisory Board Roadmap and SSEN’s internal planning cycles, particularly around programmes for performance panel assessment, stakeholder engagement, and internal management strategy sessions:

Variable	Way of working
Frequency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ The Advisory Board meets quarterly, with a weighting to in-person meetings, meeting at SSEN’s key operational sites across the UK. ➤ During 2025, only one meeting was held virtually, though from time-to-time individual members have participated by MS Teams if necessary.
Agenda	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ The Advisory Board works broadly to a Roadmap, agreed with SSEN DSO executive members. The roadmap is designed to address critical and scheduled activities set out in the DSO plan in the next twelve months ahead of time, whilst reserving some time to consider questions of a more strategic and longer-term nature. ➤ Each meeting is then supported by a clear specific agenda, derived from the roadmap, and agreed by the Advisory Board Chair, on behalf of its members, with the SSEN DSO executive at least a [month] prior to each meeting.
Pre-meeting preparation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Supporting papers (either from SSEN, industry papers, or from relevant third parties) to facilitate the agreed agenda are circulated two weeks in advance of each board, with “exam questions” where relevant, to guide the Advisory Board members review of information in preparation for the Board discussion.
Meetings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Meetings typically last 4-5 hours. Detailed minutes are taken by a designated secretariat from SSEN. The SSEN DSO executive are not standing members of the Advisory Board, and attend by invite only, however it is usual for several of the team to attend and present key topics at each session. ➤ Discussion items usually begin with a short, overview presentation by the SSEN team on the agenda item, supplementing the pre-reading, and specifying the areas where Advisory Board input is desired. ➤ There are then question and answer sessions, during which initial feedback from the Advisory Board may also be offered. An Advisory Board only discussion typically takes place, excluding external members, to further determine the Board’s specific feedback and recommendations.
Post-meeting alignment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ By the end of the first week, draft minutes are produced and circulated for agreement and finalisation. ➤ This will include supplemental information-based questions to SSEN DSO, identified by the Advisory Board as useful to further their understanding of the topics discussed. ➤ Related strategic questions surfaced during a meeting, but not able to be answered during the session, are captured as items to consider for future Advisory Board agenda. ➤ In the month following the meeting, the Advisory Board chair discusses the main recommendations and advice from the meeting with SSEN DSO executive members to ensure clarity.



Board evaluation

At the end of 2025, the Board conducted an anonymous, likert scale based, 22 question survey of its members. The purpose was to review effectiveness of our ways or working and identify areas for improvement as we enter 2026.

The results were positive:

Area	Rating	Feedback
Board governance	Strong	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ High-quality materials ➤ Clear agendas & purpose ➤ Chair rated highly
Board constitution & engagement	Strong	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Strong expertise, independence & trust ➤ Members feel well utilised ➤ Time commitments manageable
SSEN DSO engagement	Strong	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Members feel well utilised ➤ Timely updates ➤ Decisions & responses well tracked ➤ High confidence SSEN acts on Board input ➤ Clear line of sight from feedback to outcomes

No material areas for improvement were identified. The Board will repeat this exercise annually.

The review also considered the desire to refresh Board membership as we move towards year 3 in 2027, to ensure continued independence.

A programme of transition will commence as we move from the end of 2026 to the start of 2027.

Subject to finding acceptable candidates, the intention is that two members of the existing Board will end their period of service at that point.

Key themes

The Board has now completed its second full year of operation, with a significantly expanded programme of activity during 2025. In the last twelve months, our focus has broadened and deepened, reflecting the increasing complexity of SSEN DSO's activities and the evolving expectations of Ofgem, stakeholders and customers as the pace of decarbonisation accelerates.

These main areas of focus during this year have continued from 2024:

- Strategy
- Planning & options assessment
- Flexibility markets
- Operational Decision Making



Customer engagement, support & data provision But, through these categories, the Board’s work during 2025 has included a more extensive programme of thematic reviews, including:

- Continued strategy refinement and interrogation of the relationship between activities, outcomes and benefits, regarding DSO performance panel and stakeholder feedback, and a preparatory mindset for ED3.
- Greater emphasis on the role of the DSO in supporting vulnerable consumers and driving inclusivity
- Assistance to SSEN DSO on boundary setting, activity prioritisation and innovation focus in community and local energy.
- Driving market participation in (and scrutinising the application of) flexibility market products.
- Exploring readiness for, and execution of, the DSO’s role in connection queue reforms
- Focussing on the relationship between DFES and tRESP regarding network options planning and ED3 business plan preparation
- Examining enhancements to data accessibility and customer experience.

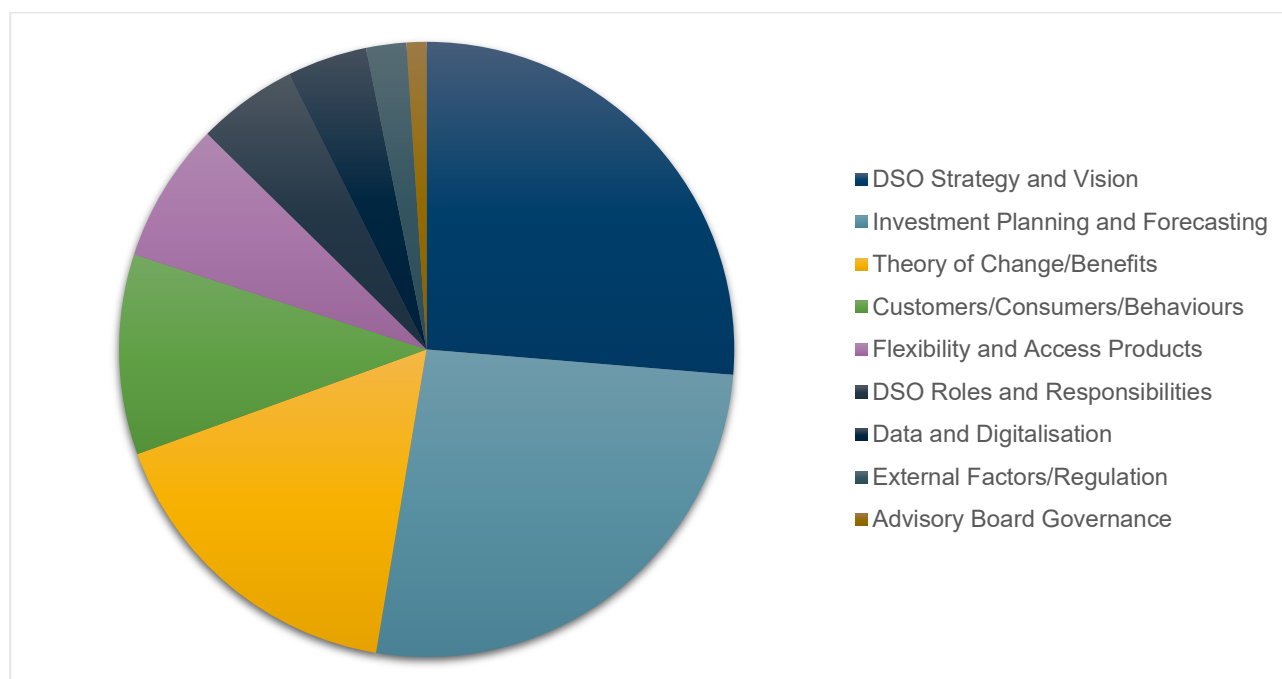


Fig 1. Distribution of DSO AB Recommendations Themes



Strategy

Since its inception, the Board has paid great attention to SSEN's DSO articulation of vision, key drivers, and how this could be reshaped to better resonate with stakeholders.

Following on from the Theory of Change Model work in 2024, during 2025, the Board undertook a deeper review of SSEN DSO's strategic positioning, including the need to update the strategy considering changes in regulator and consumer expectation since DSO inception, performance panel feedback and stakeholder feedback, and shifts in macro-level assumptions. This included further structured sessions on the Theory of Change Model (ToCM), with a focus on the completeness of the benefits framework, the clarity of outcome definitions, and the appropriateness of measurement approaches.

The Board reviewed SSEN DSO's emerging ED3 strategy and its alignment with Ofgem expectations and input (such as from Ofgem's ED3 Sector Specific Methodology Consultation), providing challenge on the organisation's reframing of its strategic objectives, its ability to deliver its stated goals and on how best to articulate value for money given the likely trajectory of network-related elements of consumer bills. In doing so, the Board began to build a more meaningful relationship with SSEN's Independent Stakeholder Panel, where relevant, with a particular benefit arising from access to survey's conducted across different customer types, to ascertain priorities and attitudes for different constituencies that SSEN DSO serves.

The Board also supported SSEN DSO in developing a coherent framework for community and local energy ahead of ED3, including capability building within SSEN, clearer definitions of community energy models, and greater attention to community-based solutions (including energy efficiency) in planning and connections processes.

During 2025, a consistent theme in conversations regarding SSEN DSO strategy was the emphasis on vulnerability, with Board arguing that the focus moves beyond network resilience and security of supply for vulnerable customers, to reducing fuel poverty and enabling inclusion in the low-carbon transition. The Board recognised the boundaries around what a DSO can do unilaterally in these areas, instead asking SSEN to consider the need for coordination with other actors who influence consumer outcomes, and how the DSO can use data, customer trust and access, and stakeholder relationships, to be a positive convener of solutions.

In addition, the Board provided early feedback on SSEN DSO's DSO Panel submissions, including supplementary questions raised by the Panel, and supported SSEN DSO in interpreting areas of relative strength and underperformance.



Planning & options assessment

The Board explored the Distribution Network Options Assessment (DNOA) methodology and its application, as well as the DNOA Assurance Process and related Reports.

In 2025, the Board undertook a more detailed appraisal of how its previous feedback had been incorporated into the DNOA process, including improvements to the assurance scope and the clarity of reporting. The Board also reviewed the appropriateness of some prior decisions versus realised outcomes and advised on how to better capture tensions between load and non-load (flexibility) determinations and broader conflicts that may be relevant to decision making.

The Board also examined the preparedness of SSEN DSO for the connections queue reform programme, focusing on progress, measurement, and the transition to business-as-usual processes.

The Board also examined the DFES process, as part of the annual work SSEN undertakes to update its planning assumptions. In 2025, this included a review of how accurate previous DFES assumptions had been in SSEN's DSO licence areas. The Board also explored how DFES and tRESP will combine to inform ED3 business planning.

Flexibility markets

The Board undertook a comparative review of SSEN DSO's flexibility procurement relative to other DSOs, focusing on the balance between procurement volumes, dispatch volumes and reliability. The Board also examined whether the full benefits of flexibility delivery were being captured and how to improve alignment between forecast and actual dispatch needs.

Operational decision making

The During 2025, the Board reviewed the performance and outcomes arising from SSEN DSO's Operational Decision-Making Framework, including how feedback from the previous year had been acted upon.

Customer engagement & data

The board reviewed stakeholder insights regarding DSO performance and additional services, support and information. This included a focus on customer outcomes, and SSENs vulnerability strategy and partnerships

The Board reviewed proposed upgrades to the data portal, with an emphasis on improving applicability to customer use cases, enhancing accessibility, and how to structure customer data access.



Summary areas of impact

During 2025, as the Board’s programme of work expanded, the breadth and depth of its impact increased significantly. The Board’s advice influenced strategic direction, operational processes, customer-facing improvements, and the development of new approaches to flexibility, vulnerability, and community energy. The following table summarises the most material areas of impact during the reporting period, incorporating the enhanced focus areas from 2025.

Area	Key impact
DSO Strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ The Board’s continued review of the DSO structure, purpose, vision and customer benefits using the ToCM has led to a change in the DSO strategic decision making, an improvement in the articulation of logic between inputs, activities, outcomes and benefits and an improvement in selection and calibration of performance KPIs ➤ The Board also positively shaped SSEN DSO’s emerging ED3 strategy, including alignment with Ofgem expectations, customer and stakeholder feedback, and clarity of strategic goals. ➤ The Board has driven continued improvement, advising SSEN DSO on activities that have elevated assessment scores by the Performance Panel, and improved comparative performance to other DSOs. ➤ Through each strand, the Board has elevated concerns about consumer vulnerability and inclusivity to the top of SSEN DSO’s thought processes.
DNOA & Connections	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ The Board’s review continues to drive improvements to the scope, and clarity of reporting in DNOA assurance, and the treatment of tensions between load and non-load (flexibility) options. ➤ Regarding connections reform, the Board provided insight on progress measurement, process risk mitigation, and process migration into business-as-usual.
Flexibility Markets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ The Board have shaped initiatives to increase procurement volumes, dispatch reliability for services necessary to deliver the value of flexibility to the network and to customers ➤
Data	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ The Board reviewed proposed upgrades to the data portal, advising on improvements to customer use-case applicability, and accessibility which SSEN have adopted in their delivery programme.



Future activities

In 2026, the focus of the Board’s work will reflect the maturing of SSEN DSO’s ED3 Business Plan, the increasing importance of whole-system coordination, and the need for continued scrutiny of flexibility, data, vulnerability, and spatial planning.

The shaping of future activities has been driven by Board member feedback, and engagement with SSEN DSO team on the likely calendar of critical developments as 2026 unfolds.

During the Board evaluation, members were asked to identify areas they would like the Board to focus on in 2026. The results indicate a desire for members to shift from strategic framing, to driving accountability and performance in delivery and execution, with an increasing emphasis on vulnerability, fuel poverty, flexibility market scaling and general DSO benefits realisation.

Reflecting this, and the expected DSO activities in 2026, which will encompass ED3 business plan delivery alongside continued performance against ED2, over the next annual period, we anticipate that the DSO Advisory Board will focus on the following:

Terms of Reference criterion	Next Steps for the Advisory Board in 2026
The pace, effectiveness and timeliness of our DSO delivery plans and DSO operational decision-making methodologies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Undertake a sustained review of SSEN DSO’s ED3 Business Plan across the year, including extended sessions covering the full breadth of DSO activities. This will include scrutiny of assumptions, deliverability, customer value, and alignment with Ofgem expectations. ➤ Review in-year business performance, benefits tracking and the development of the DSO Panel submission. Challenge on performance metrics, evidence quality, and the articulation of benefits to customers and stakeholders.
Assurance of the approach undertaken for, and the conclusions contained in, our annual independent audit of the transparency of our operations and our DNOA outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Review DNOA-related updates through 2026 including interactions with DNOA assurer ➤ Provide proactive and reactive assessment of SSEN’s conflict resolution approach (internal and external), including the DSO AB conflict management process.
Critical assessment of how we are meeting our four DSO priorities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Provide input into accelerating digitalisation activities, including Data Portal and Data Architecture enhancements. ➤ Review progress on flexibility market development, including market engagement, dispatch performance, and the alignment of flexibility procurement with system needs.
A continuous examination of whether actions taken are locally reflective, widen participation and support vulnerable customers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Review SSEN’s work on social flexibility, energy efficiency, local and community energy. ➤ Challenge on how vulnerability considerations are expanded and embedded across planning, flexibility and customer engagement, and how SSEN DSO collaborates to deliver holistic outcomes. ➤ Review stakeholder engagement activities, including survey feedback and broader engagement plans.



Management Response

I would like to thank the Chair and members of the SSEN DSO Advisory Board for their continued commitment, challenge and professionalism throughout 2025-26. As the Board completes its second full year, the quality of insight and depth of understanding they bring to SSEN's DSO activities has continued to grow, enabling increasingly targeted and constructive challenge.

The Board's work has had a direct and practical impact on how we operate as a DSO. Its scrutiny of our strategy, decision-making frameworks and evidence base has strengthened the way we articulate outcomes, assess trade-offs and demonstrate value for customers and the wider system. Challenge on the Distribution Network Options Assessment, Engineering Justification Papers and Operational Decision Making has influenced how we treat uncertainty and diverging views, improving the robustness and transparency of our decisions.

The Board has also played an important role in shaping our readiness for ED3. Its use of a Theory of Change lens has reinforced the discipline of linking activity to outcomes and benefits, sharpening our performance metrics and strengthening our engagement with the Performance Panel and stakeholders. In areas such as flexibility, data and customer engagement, the Board's cross-sector perspective has helped us test our approaches against emerging best practice and encouraged us to focus on usability and impact, not just delivery.

We have particularly valued the Board's challenge on vulnerability and fairness. While recognising the limits of what a DSO can do alone, this has prompted us to think more clearly about how we work with others to address affordability and inclusion across the energy system. I would like to thank the Board for its continued challenge and support, and we look forward to working with it as we embed these improvements and move into delivery at scale.

Andrew Roper, DSO Director, SSEN Distribution



Confirmation of independence & report completeness

On behalf of the Advisory Board, I hereby confirm that, each member of the Advisory Board (and this the Advisory Board collectively) is (and has been during the period) independent of SSEN, in accordance with the requirements set out in the ToR.

We have no relationships with, or interests in, SSEN that would impair or threaten this independence.

Further, the Advisory Board has operated, and continues to operate, in accordance with the principles of integrity, objectivity, professional competence, due care, and confidentiality in the work that it has conducted, including in the preparation of this report.

As Chair of the Advisory Board, I therefore commend the publication of this report on behalf of the Advisory Board as a true, fair and independent summary of our activities in the period.

Signed,

Gareth Miller, Independent Chair, SSEN DSO Advisory Board

[Date: 20th March 2026]



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