Meeting	Independent Stakeholder Group
Location	Online
Date	2 November 2026

Attendees – Panel Members	
Sharon Darcy (SD) **(Chair)**	Tamar Bourne (TB)
Claire Whyley (CWh) **(Vice Chair)** (Partial Attendee)	Barry Coughlan (BC) (Partial Attendee)
Chris Watts (CW)	Andrew McMunnigall (AM)
	Keith Gardner (KG)
Apologies	
Fayza Benlamkaden (FB)	Barbara Whiting (BW)
Attendees – SSEN, Distribution	
Nikki Nicol (NN), Engagement Delivery Manager, SSEN Distribution	Emma Merritt (EM), Customer Vulnerability and Communities Lead, SSEN Distribution (Partial Attendee)
Lyndsey Stainton (LS), Head of Stakeholder Engagement, SSEN Distribution	Chris Burchell (CB), Managing Director, SSEN Distribution (Partial Attendee)
Christoph Grafe (CG), Head of ED3 Strategy, SSEN Distribution	Graeme Keddie (GK), Director of Corporate Affairs, SSEN Distribution (Partial Attendee)
Sara McGonigle (SM), ED3 Programme Director, SSEN Distribution	Bryan O'Neill (BO), Head of Regulatory Investment, SSEN Distribution (Partial Attendee)
Mark Askew (MA), Head of Connections Policy and Performance, SSEN Distribution (Partial Attendee)	

Minutes

Item No.	Agenda Item
1.	**Welcome and Introductions – Sharon Darcy** The Chair welcomed members and confirmed that the previous minutes were approved, with no conflicts of interest declared. The Group discussed arrangements for a final review of the near-final ED3 Business Plan and agreed that members would focus on sections aligned with their areas of expertise. Members were also updated on planned post-submission engagement with Ofgem and changes to the ISG meeting schedule. The Group reviewed the outstanding action log and noted that several actions had been completed.
2.	**SROI Update – Emma Merritt**

	SSEN provided an update on the development of the industry-wide Social Return on Investment methodology for vulnerability services and targeted storm support. The revised approach is intended to improve consistency and comparability across distribution network operators and to reflect a broader range of customer-support activities. The ISG discussed how social value evidence would inform partnership selection, performance monitoring and future reporting. Members asked to see the final results and any resulting changes to the relevant strategies, with a clear explanation of how the evidence had influenced decisions
3.	**Stakeholder Engagement Update – Lyndsey Stainton** An update was provided on the independent assurance of stakeholder engagement and the evidence trail linking customer and stakeholder insight to strategies, commitments and the Business Plan. The review identified examples of strong practice as well as areas where evidence, testing and traceability could be strengthened. Members emphasised the need to distinguish between an established engagement process and the extent to which evidence had influenced proposals at different stages. The ISG also discussed the stakeholder and consumer decision logs, the treatment of divergent views and trade-offs, and the need for clear evidence of how late-stage research had been reflected in the final plan. An update was also provided on acceptability testing, with results to be shared once available.
4.	**Recap on Strategies – ISG Members** The ISG reviewed updated versions of the Environmental Action Plan, Connections Strategy and Vulnerability Strategy. Members recognised that the documents had improved and that earlier feedback had largely been reflected. Further refinements were requested on governance and monitoring, the link between commitments and customer satisfaction, licence-area-specific evidence, and the ability to respond to changing strategic demand. For the Vulnerability Strategy, members asked for the level of ambition, key trade-offs and consideration of longer-term and intergenerational vulnerability to be made clearer.
5.	**ED3 Programme, Regulation and Strategy Update – Sara McGonigle, Ryan McKay and Christoph Grafe** SSEN provided an update on progress towards completion of the ED3 Business Plan, including assurance, cross-checking and consistency across the main plan and supporting documents. The ISG discussed the proposed commitments and stressed that each target should be supported by a clear baseline, rationale and explanation of customer benefit. Members also requested consistent terminology and figures, stronger context for reliability measures, and a clearer account of how commitments would be governed, monitored and delivered.
6.	**Review of the Business Plan – Sara McGonigle, Bryan O'Neill and Christoph Grafe** Members reviewed the developing Business Plan and welcomed clearer licence-area differentiation, stronger explanation of past performance and improved links between stakeholder evidence and proposals. The ISG asked for further strengthening of the golden thread from evidence to trade-offs, decisions, commitments and delivery. Members also requested clearer explanation of affordability, fairness, innovation, governance and accountability, together with consistent presentation of costs and outcomes. Discussion covered long-term planning, load and non-load investment, reliability, island investment, customer outcomes, digital capability, workforce and supply-chain delivery. The

	Group emphasised that the final plan should explain why proposed investment and targets represented the right balance for customers, while remaining adaptable to uncertainty.
7.	**Focus on the Challenge Log – All** The ISG reviewed the remaining open challenges. Challenges relating to publication of research and public acceptance were closed following the provision of additional evidence. Challenges concerning evidence-based planning, the overall narrative and golden thread, and the consistent treatment of trade-offs remained open pending review of the near-final Business Plan. No new challenges were raised.
8.	**AOB – All** The Group confirmed arrangements for a final Business Plan review session. Members also discussed the ISG's future work programme, including readiness for ED3, monitoring delivery of commitments, stakeholder influence during implementation and lessons learned from the planning process. The Chair provided a high-level update on wider discussions about the future role of stakeholder groups and the longer-term price-control framework. The December meeting was cancelled, with the next formal session planned for January.