

Meeting	Independent Stakeholder Group
Date	23 January 2026
Location	Forbury, Reading
Attendees – Panel Members	
Sharon Darcy (SD) (Chair)	Fayza Benlamkaden (FB)
Chris Watts (CW)	Barry Coughlan (BC)
Claire Whyley (CWh)	
Attendees – SSEN, Distribution	
Hollie Wilson (HW), Stakeholder Engagement Manager, SSEN Distribution	Michael Downey (MD), Connections Stakeholder Manager, SSEN Distribution (Partial Attendee)
Lyndsey Stainton (LS), Head of Stakeholder Engagement, SSEN Distribution	Vanessa Head (VH), Connections Strategy Manager, SSEN Distribution (Partial Attendee)
Clothilde Cantegrel (CC), Head of Strategy, SSEN Distribution (Partial Attendee)	Graeme Keddie (GK), Director of Corporate Affairs, SSEN Distribution (Partial Attendee)
Sam Roberts (SR), ED3 Project Manager, SSEN Distribution (Partial Attendee)	Andrew Scott (AS), Director of Customer Service, SSEN Distribution (Partial Attendee)
Carys Periam (CP) Lead ED3 Project Manager, SSEN Distribution (Partial Attendee)	Andrew Roper (AR), Director of DSO, SSEN Distribution (Partial Attendee)
Andrew Wainwright (AW), DSO Whole Systems Senior Manager, SSEN Distribution (Partial Attendee)	Harry Britten (HB), Strategic Development Engineer, SSEN Distribution (Partial Attendee)
Lesley McClusky (LM), Service Designer, SSEN Distribution (Partial Attendee)	Morgan Dryhurst (MDr), Graduate Trainee, SSEN Distribution (Partial Attendee)
Athena Buchanan (AB), Strategy Analyst, SSEN Distribution (Partial Attendee)	Daniel Mellis (DM), Connections Strategy Manager, SSEN Distribution (Partial Attendee)
Rachael Robertson (RR), Head of Finance, SSEN Distribution (Partial Observer)	Susannah Carter (SC), Stakeholder Engagement Coordinator, SSEN Distribution (Partial Observer)
Joshua Indenhuck (JI), Baringa Consultant on behalf of SSEN Distribution (Partial Attendee)	
Apologies	
Tamar Bourne (TB)	Andrew McMunnigall (AM)

Minutes

Item No.	Agenda Item
1.	<p>Welcome and Introductions – Sharon Darcy</p> <p>Welcome and Introductions</p> <p>The Chair welcomed members and attendees.</p> <p>In relation to the agenda for the day, and specifically any discussion on the Warm Homes Plan, SD noted that she is also a board member of the Energy Saving Trust.</p>

	<p>Action Log and Governance Updates</p> <p>A future presentation on reliability will be scheduled, providing more granular CI and CML data with cross-DNO comparisons.</p> <p>International case studies work remains under review; a written update will be shared with ISG members.</p> <p>Feedback was requested on new presentation templates, with supporting guidance material being developed.</p> <p>A summary paper outlining relationships between the ISG, DSO Advisory Board and Inclusive Services Panel will be shared with Chairs and published on the ED3 ISG microsite.</p>
2.	<p>ED3 Strategy and Regulation Update – Clothilde Cantegreil</p> <p>Regulatory Determinations and Business Plan Incentives</p> <p>An update was provided on recent GD3 and T3 determinations, highlighting the importance of strong evidence, clarity of presentation and alignment with Ofgem expectations. Lessons from Transmission determinations are being reviewed to inform Distribution ED3 planning.</p> <p>Changes to the Business Plan Incentive (BPI) framework were discussed, including increased emphasis on delivery and potential removal of ambition metrics for Distribution. The ISG emphasised the importance of transparency, stakeholder engagement quality and consumer evidence.</p> <p>Cost Assessment, Finance and Bill Impacts</p> <p>The ISG discussed cost assessment methodologies, comparative impacts and the need for clearer articulation of bill impacts. A dedicated finance teach-in is planned for February, including discussion of bill impact scenarios and read-across from Transmission (T3).</p> <p>Innovation and Deliverability</p> <p>Innovation within Business as Usual was highlighted, alongside the need to demonstrate deliverability following ED2 performance challenges. Visual amenity impacts were noted as more significant for Transmission than Distribution.</p> <p>Warm Homes Plan – Policy Update</p> <p>An overview of the Warm Homes Plan was provided, including emerging delivery targets and implications for DNOs such as fuse upgrades and load checks. The DNO enhanced coordinator role and links to place-based schemes were discussed, with Ofgem expected to consult further.</p> <p>SSEN will continue engagement with Government and Ofgem, with further updates to be brought back to the ISG following upcoming consultations.</p> <p>Business Plan Incentive (BPI) Early Proposals</p> <p>Early proposals are under development, informed by engagement and consumer research. A new proposal, Resilience as a Service, was outlined, focused on using battery solutions during outages to reduce environmental impact and prioritise vulnerable customers.</p> <p>The ISG discussed opportunities and challenges relating to joint submissions, strategic spares, supply chain resilience, alternatives to SF6 assets, and the importance of articulating consumer benefits and bill impacts.</p>

3.	<p>ED3 Programme Update – Sam Roberts and Carys Periam</p> <p>The ED3 delivery plan and key milestones were outlined, including upcoming Ofgem consultations and areas of timetable uncertainty. Senior-level governance engagement with the ISG is underway, with further discussion on the most effective structure for ISG deep-dive sessions.</p> <p>ISG members were asked to review and confirm priority topics for future deep dives.</p>
4.	<p>Stakeholder Engagement Update – Lyndsey Stainton and Graeme Keddie</p> <p>Enduring Consumer Research</p> <p>Proposals for an enduring consumer research programme were discussed, including panel structure, future consumer representation and delivery methods. ISG members emphasised the importance of deliberative depth and independence, clarity on group definitions and the potential limitations of online delivery.</p> <p>Stakeholder Events</p> <p>Planned stakeholder events for March were outlined. The ISG encouraged continued challenge, clear identification of stakeholder segments in reporting and inclusion of a “You said, we did” summary for past engagement.</p>
5.	<p>ED3 Workstream 3: Connections – Michael Downey and Vanessa Head</p> <p>Overview and ED2 Context</p> <p>SSEN provided an overview of ED2 Connections performance and priorities, noting that while improvements have been made, performance is not yet where the business wants it to be. Key areas of focus include improving customer experience, developing self-service tools, strengthening the consenting process and ensuring the right priorities are being addressed.</p> <p>Regional Performance and Delivery Challenges</p> <p>Performance challenges in Central Southern England were discussed, reflecting higher demand, capacity constraints and workforce pressures compared to the North.</p> <p>SSEN outlined actions underway, including increasing in-house capability, improving systems and processes, and learning from peer DNOs through closer collaboration as part of connections reform.</p> <p>Workforce Capacity and Skills</p> <p>The ISG discussed workforce capacity, contractor reliance and the longer-term need to build sustainable skills.</p> <p>Stakeholder Engagement and Insight</p> <p>SSEN highlighted strong engagement with connections stakeholders through regular reporting, expert panels, events and day-to-day relationship management, supported by improved data capture and insight.</p> <p>Capacity Constraints and Major Connections</p> <p>Capacity constraints, particularly driven by major connections such as data centres, were highlighted as an ongoing challenge. SSEN is using Strategic Development Plans to accelerate</p>

solutions and is exploring more effective engagement approaches to manage stakeholder fatigue.

Regulatory Change and Connections Reform

Regulatory change and connections reform were discussed, including risks associated with late policy changes, queue management and the need to balance fairness, customer outcomes and cost impacts. The importance of transparency, clear communications and understanding consumer and bill impacts was emphasised.

Looking ahead to ED3, SSEN outlined its ambition to focus on core enablers, innovation and alternative solutions to support low-carbon technology connections, building on learning from ED2. The ISG supported a realistic and deliverable approach, underpinned by clear customer communication and accountability on costs and outcomes.

6. ED3 Workstream 11: LV Strategy – Andrew Wainwright and Harry Britton

Overview and Context

SSEN provided an update on its Low Voltage (LV) strategy, building on ED2 learning, with a focus on unlooping and longer-term LV network planning to support low-carbon technology (LCT) adoption.

Unlooping: Scale and Customer Impact

Unlooping was discussed as a complex, industry-wide challenge with significant customer disruption and cost implications. SSEN highlighted that unlooping requirements are property-specific, can involve intrusive works and neighbour coordination, and are more prevalent in certain housing types. Improving data and intelligence to better understand the scale and location of unlooped properties was identified as a priority.

Programme-Based Delivery and Place-Based Solutions

The ISG supported a shift away from reactive, customer-led delivery towards a more programme-based approach. This would involve proactive communication, clearer sequencing of works and coordinated delivery of mains and service upgrades, helping to reduce disruption and improve customer experience. Links were also made to the Warm Homes Plan and the potential for place-based and smart solutions, such as storage, to reduce the need for physical unlooping in some cases. Further thinking is needed in this space.

Data, Modelling and Network Readiness

The importance of data, modelling and network readiness was emphasised, including the use of LV network modelling to target interventions more effectively and avoid unnecessary whole-estate works where demand remains uncertain. Smart enablers and storage were highlighted as key tools in managing demand and supporting LCT uptake.

Collaboration, Communications and Legitimacy

Opportunities for cross-utility coordination, commercial incentives and collaboration with suppliers were discussed, alongside the need for careful consideration of communications, legitimacy and public acceptance given the disruptive nature of unlooping. The ISG noted the importance of developing a clear, fair and nationally consistent narrative.

Customer Insight, Pilots and Next Steps

SSEN also outlined plans to develop customer personas, journey mapping and pilot activity to test different delivery approaches. The ISG supported testing end-to-end customer journeys,

	<p>fairness framing and both place-based and customer-led models, with learning to inform ED3 proposals and engagement with Ofgem and Government.</p>
7.	<p>A.O.B – All</p> <p>Closing Remarks</p> <p>No additional challenges were raised. The Chair summarised recent ISG Chair engagement with Ofgem and NESO and confirmed that actions from the session would be circulated.</p>