REVIEW OF THE ELECTRICITY GUARANTEED STANDARDS OF SERVICE AND OVERALL STANDARDS OF PERFORMANCE

Consultation Document

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Utility Regulator

About the Utility Regulator

The Utility Regulator is the independent non-ministerial government department responsible for regulating Northern Ireland's electricity, gas, water and sewerage industries, to promote the short and long-term interests of consumers.

We are not a policy-making department of government, but we make sure that the energy and water utility industries in Northern Ireland are regulated and developed within ministerial policy as set out in our statutory duties.

We are governed by a Board of Directors and are accountable to the Northern Ireland Assembly through financial and annual reporting obligations.

We are based at Millenium House in the centre of Belfast. The Chief Executive and two Executive Directors lead teams in each of the main functional areas in the organisation: CEO Office; Price Controls; Networks and Energy Futures; and Markets and Consumer Protection and Enforcement. The staff team includes economists, engineers, accountants, utility specialists, legal advisors and administration professionals.

OUR MISSION

To protect the short and long-term interests of consumers of electricity, gas and water.

OUR VISION

To ensure value and sustainability in energy and water.

OUR VALUES

ACCOUNTABLE: We take ownership of our actions.

TRANSPARENT: Ensuring trust through openness and honesty.

COLLABORATIVE: Connecting and working with others for a shared purpose.

DILIGENT: Working with care and rigour.

RESPECTFUL: Treating everyone with dignity and fairness.

ABSTRACT

Supplemental to the Utility Regulator's (UR) Review of the Electricity Guaranteed Standards of Service (GSS) and Overall Standards of Performance (OSP) consultation paper (August 2023). This paper consults on all metering GSS and OSP standards, introducing a GSS standard for supply restoration in severe weather conditions and introducing inflationary uplifts to GSS payments. The paper also provides clarification on current GSS responsibilities for the electricity distributor and electricity suppliers.

AUDIENCE

This document is most likely to be of interest to the electricity distributor and electricity supply companies, regulated energy companies, consumer organisations, business representative organisations, community and voluntary organisations, consumers of natural gas, electricity and water, government and other statutory bodies.

CONSUMER IMPACT

GSS and OSP set out the prescribed levels of service which consumers can expect from the electricity distributor and their electricity supplier. UR's review of the GSS and OSP regimes proposes an update to the standards to enhance the levels of consumer protection offered to consumers in Northern Ireland.

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Executive Summary

Background

The electricity Guaranteed Standards of Service (GSS) set out prescribed service levels which domestic and non-domestic consumers can expect in individual cases from both their electricity distributor (in Northern Ireland, this is Northern Ireland Electricity Networks [NIE Networks]) and their electricity supplier. The GSS are specified in Regulations made under Article 42 of the Electricity (Northern Ireland) Order 1992 (the **Electricity Order**)[1]. They include payments to individual consumers in recognition of poor performance, specifically where there has been a failure by a company to deliver against a standard of performance for which it is reasonably expected to meet, subject to certain exemptions. The GSS regime aims to acknowledge the inconvenience caused to the consumer when a company's performance falls below the prescribed level. However, the payment values do not reflect or attempt to remedy the actual loss, either partial or whole, experienced by each consumer in the unique circumstances of every case.

The electricity Overall Standards of Performance (OSP) set out general required standards that are not individual consumer specific and do not carry a payment to consumers if breached. The OSP are specified in a Determination made by the Utility Regulator (UR) under Article 43 and 43A of the Electricity Order[2] (as it existed at the time they were made) and licensees have a licence obligation to conduct their business in a manner which they reasonably consider to be best calculated to achieve any OSP.

The current electricity GSS are set out in the Electricity (Standards of Performance) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1993 (as last amended in 1999) – the **GSS Regulations**. The current OSP Determination has been in place since 1993.

Review of GSS Regulations and OSP Determinations

The purpose of this review is to update the current electricity GSS Regulations and OSP Determinations for the electricity distributor and electricity supply companies in Northern Ireland to ensure that the GSS and OSP provisions are fit for purpose and provide an enhanced level of consumer protection to Northern Ireland consumers.

UR has conducted a review of the electricity GSS Regulations and OSP Determinations. This review has involved carrying out consumer research with domestic and non-domestic consumers to gain insights into consumer views on the requirements, stakeholder engagement, a benchmarking exercise to our

[1] Article 42 - The Electricity (Northern Ireland) Order 1992
[2] Article 43 and 43A - The Electricity (Northern Ireland) Order 1992

local Northern Ireland (NI) gas GSS Regulations, and consideration of similar electricity GSS and OSP provisions in Great Britain (GB).

2023 consultation

We published a consultation paper on the proposed changes to the Electricity GSS and OSP on 10 August 2023[3]. The consultation closed on 2 November 2023 and received six responses.

Other than the specific areas highlighted in this paper (metering and supply restoration standards), there are no substantive changes to the remaining proposed GSS and OSP as consulted on in the 2023 consultation. However, a full list of the proposed GSS and OSP are available in Chapters 8 and 10 if stakeholders wish to make further comment.

Responses received to the 2023 consultation will still be used to inform our final decisions, where those responses relate to proposals that have not substantively changed in the 2025 consultation.

Purpose of this consultation paper

Since the closure of the previous consultation in the November 2023 UR has further reviewed the scope and application of the electricity GSS Regulations and OSP Determinations. This review has clarified that the position outlined by UR in its 2023 consultation paper was not quite correct and is consistent with UR's current understanding of the legal position. This included clarification of the existing role of both the electricity distributor and electricity suppliers to deliver GSS to consumers and on electricity suppliers' responsibilities in relation to metering.

We have therefore, in this consultation paper, provided clarification of the correct application of the GSS and are re-consulting on the metering related standards with all interested parties. This consultation paper reflects the correct position and seeks to ensure that both the electricity distributor and electricity suppliers are applying the GSS Regulations in the appropriate manner.

In addition, the events of Storm Éowyn in January 2025 have highlighted a need to explore the role of the GSS during periods of severe weather. Following the storm, a working group was established involving the Department for the Economy (DfE), NIE Networks and UR to consider the options available to facilitate the provision of payments to consumers who had lost power due to the severe weather. One of the outworkings of the group was a commitment for UR

[3] Review of Electricity Guaranteed Standards of Service and Overall Standards of Performance | Utility Regulator

to revisit the supply restoration GSS regulation to specifically consult on the suitability of providing a GSS that would apply during severe weather.

Finally, UR consults on raising the payment levels offered under each GSS regulation, and on the introduction of inflationary uplifts to these payments using a pre-set formula. This would bring the payments in line with those offered in GB, which have been further updated since UR's 2023 consultation was published. The introduction of a system for inflationary uplifts would allow GSS payments to stay economically relevant without requiring a full review of the GSS regime.

The purpose of this paper is to consult on the areas of the GSS and OSP review which require additional consideration only. It does not seek to re-consult on the full contents of UR's 2023 consultation paper, as there are no substantive changes to those proposals outside of the areas included in this paper.

The responses received to both consultations will be used to inform our 'Final Decisions on the Review of Electricity Guaranteed Standards of Service and Overall Standards of Performance' and any changes that may need to be made in respect of introducing any new and updated GSS and OSP requirements for all licensed electricity supply and distribution companies.

Next steps

UR will review the responses received to this consultation in addition to those received to the 2023 consultation, prior to publishing its Final Decision paper.

Following this, UR's next steps are to provide for new standards:

- UR will present the new set of GSS Regulations to DfE for its consent. If it consents to the new Regulations, DfE will have the responsibility of laying the Regulations before the Northern Ireland Assembly. Regulations made under Article 42 of the Electricity Order are subject to negative resolution, as per Article 93(2) of the Electricity Order[4].
- OSPs are a Determination which are made by UR under Article 43 and 43A of the Electricity Order. Following publication of the Final Decision paper, UR will proceed to make new Determinations which will specify the OSPs that are applicable to the electricity distributor and those which are applicable to all electricity suppliers. Following publication of the Determinations, it is the duty of the licensees to conduct their business in a manner which they reasonably consider to be best calculated to achieve any OSP.

[4] The Electricity (Northern Ireland) Order 1992

Future review of electricity GSS

UR is mindful that further reviews of the electricity GSS Regulations and OSP Determinations will be required to ensure they remain fit for purpose and to capture changing consumer expectations for service standards, as well as any other changes in the market and/or consumer protection practices.

A future review of the GSS and OSP will be completed by UR and will build upon the enhanced protections offered by the current review process.

1. Introduction

Background

1.1 The electricity GSS set out prescribed service levels which domestic and non-domestic consumers can expect in individual cases from both their electricity distributor (in Northern Ireland, this is Northern Ireland Electricity Networks [NIE Networks]) and their electricity supplier, in relation to a standard of service for which the company is reasonably expected to meet, subject to certain exemptions.

1.2 The GSS are a statutory provision specified in Regulations made under Article 42 of the Electricity Order[5]. The standards have been in place since 1994 and are set out in the Electricity (Standards of Performance) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1993[6]. They were subsequently amended in 1999 under the Electricity (Standards of Performance) (Amendment No 3) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1999[7].

1.3 The GSS include payments in recognition of poor performance, specifically where there has been a failure by a company to adhere to the standards which they are reasonably expected to deliver. They are subject to specific exemptions, which are set out in the Regulations. The payments are not intended to compensate consumers for any loss incurred as a result of the failure to provide a standard of service, rather they are intended as an acknowledgement of the inconvenience that this may cause.

1.4 The electricity OSP set out general required standards that are not individual consumer specific and do not carry a payment if breached.

1.5 The OSP are specified in a Determination made by UR under Article 43 and 43A of the Electricity Order[8] and licensees have a licence obligation to conduct their business in a manner which they reasonably consider to be best calculated to achieve any OSP.

1.6 UR has conducted a review of electricity GSS Regulations and OSP Determinations. This review involved carrying out consumer research with domestic and non-domestic consumers, a benchmarking exercise to our local Northern Ireland gas GSS Regulations, and consideration of similar GSS and OSP provisions in GB.

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[5] Article 42 - The Electricity (Northern Ireland) Order 1992
[6] Electricity (Standards of Performance) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1993
[7] Electricity (Standards of Performance) (Amendment No. 3) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1999
[8] Article 43 and 43A- The Electricity (Northern Ireland) Order 1992

1.7 The purpose of the review is to update the current electricity GSS Regulations and OSP Determinations for the electricity distributor and electricity supply companies in Northern Ireland, to ensure they are fit for purpose and provide an enhanced level of consumer protection to Northern Ireland consumers.

2023 consultation

1.8 On 10 August 2023, UR published a consultation paper on its 'Review of Electricity Guaranteed Standards of Service and Overall Standards of Performance'[9].

1.9 The consultation provided details on the outcome of UR's review of the current GSS and OSP provisions in Northern Ireland and outlined its proposed changes as a result of this review. Further details of these proposed changes can be found in Chapters 5-8 of the 2023 consultation.

1.10 The public consultation was open for a period of 12 weeks and invited responses from all interested parties. The consultation closed on 2 November 2023 and received six responses.

1.11 Other than the specific areas highlighted in this paper, there are no substantial changes to the proposals set out in the 2023 paper.

1.12 Responses to the 2023 consultation will still be used to inform UR's final decisions with regard to the proposed introduction of new and updated GSS and OSP requirements for all licenced electricity supply and distribution companies.

Purpose of this paper

1.13 Following on from the 2023 consultation, this paper consults on all metering GSS and OSP standards, on introducing a GSS standard for supply restoration in severe weather conditions and on introducing inflationary uplifts to GSS payments. The paper also provides clarification on current GSS responsibilities for the electricity distributor and suppliers.

1.14 Since the 2023 consultation closed UR has reviewed the scope and application of the GSS Regulations and OSP Determinations. This review clarified the existing responsibilities of both the electricity distributor and electricity suppliers to deliver GSS to consumers and on electricity suppliers' responsibilities in relation to metering related GSS and OSP

[9] Review of Electricity Guaranteed Standards of Service and Overall Standards of Performance | Utility Regulator

standards. This is consistent with UR's current understanding of the legal position.

1.15 We have therefore corrected the information provided in our 2023 consultation paper, by providing clarification on the correct application of the GSS and also re-consulting on our proposals on the metering related standards.

1.16 This consultation paper reflects the correct position and seeks to ensure that both the electricity distributor and electricity suppliers are applying the GSS Regulations in the appropriate manner.

1.17 In addition, the events of Storm Éowyn in January 2025 have highlighted a need to explore the role of the GSS during periods of severe weather. Following the storm, a working group was established involving DfE, NIE Networks and UR to consider the options available to facilitate the provision of payments to consumers who had lost power due to the severe weather. One of the outworkings of the group was a commitment for UR to revisit the supply restoration GSS regulation to specifically consult on the suitability of providing a GSS that would apply during severe weather.

1.18 Finally, UR are consulting on an increase to the payment levels offered under each GSS regulation, and on the introduction of a mechanism to allow for inflationary uplifts to these payments. This would bring the payments in line with those offered in GB, which have been further updated since UR's 2023 consultation was published. The introduction of a system for inflationary uplifts would allow GSS payments to stay economically relevant without requiring a full review of the GSS regime.

Clarification of GSS responsibilities

1.19 In the 2023 consultation paper, UR proposed to introduce GSS and OSP for the first time for electricity suppliers in Northern Ireland.

1.20 However, following that consultation, UR has reviewed further the scope and application of the GSS Regulations and confirms that the existing GSS Regulations already currently apply in certain respects to electricity suppliers. That is, they do not only apply to the Distribution Network Operator.

1.21 UR has engaged with and clarified the position to NIE Networks and electricity suppliers. This paper clarifies the scope and application of the GSS Regulations to a wider audience in a public consultation. It does so for the purposes of assisting both the electricity distributor and electricity suppliers to apply the GSS Regulations correctly and in accordance with the relevant legislation.

1.22 The relevant legislation confirms that the provisions set out in the existing GSS Regulations apply to either the electricity distributor, the electricity supplier, or both, where applicable according to the nature of their activities.

1.23 Further details can be found in Chapter 4 – Clarification of current GSS responsibilities, where the relevant legislation is detailed.

1.24 Annex 1 of this document provides a list of the GSS Regulations, as proposed in UR's 2023 consultation, and outlines the respective responsible party.

1.25 For clarity, this legislation does not apply to the OSP which are set out using a different legislative pathway. Following consideration of consultation responses, UR will publish its Final Decision Paper on OSP and, if required to implement its final decisions, will make Determinations under Articles 43 and 43A of The Electricity Order to specify the OSPs as applicable to either the electricity distributor or electricity suppliers.

Metering related activities

1.26 Where an electricity consumer is to be charged by reference to the amount of electricity supplied to them, that supply has to be given through an appropriate meter. The statutory responsibility (as set out in Schedule 7 to the Electricity Order) for providing and maintaining an appropriate meter lies, unless the supplier agrees that the meter may be provided by the consumer, with the electricity supplier. This has been the position since privatisation, i.e. that it is a supplier's responsibility and accordingly a supply activity.

1.27 At present, under industry wide arrangements, NIE Networks is known as the 'common services provider' for electricity and undertakes the activities of meter provision, meter maintenance and meter reading, for and on behalf electricity suppliers. It does so under relevant contractual arrangements with electricity suppliers, including Distribution Use of System Agreements and the Market Registration Framework Agreement (under which the Market Registration Code is given contractual force).

1.28 Consequently, the GSS Regulations and OSP Determinations need to be updated to ensure that they reflect the applicable legislation, are fit for purpose, and that any provision related to a metering activity is clearly defined as the responsibility of the electricity supplier.

1.29 This consultation paper provides clarification on the application of the current GSS Regulations and focuses on UR's proposals for changes to the GSS and OSP standards. However, UR acknowledges that there may be implications on market operations and is committed to working with industry to consider these and, if applicable, any changes required to the industry arrangements.

1.30 Further details can be found in Chapter 5 – Metering.

1.31 Annex 1 of this document provides a full list of the proposed GSS Regulations, including details of the electricity supplier and electricity distributor's responsibilities in relation to metering related GSS.

1.32 Annex 2 of this document provides a full list of the proposed OSP Determinations, including details of the electricity supplier's responsibilities in relation to metering related OSP.

Provisions for periods of severe weather

1.33 The events of Storm Éowyn in January 2025 have highlighted a need to explore the role of the GSS during periods of severe weather.

1.34 As a result, UR has revisited the supply restoration GSS regulation to specifically consult on the options around a GSS during severe weather.

1.35 Further details can be found in Chapter 6 – Supply restoration in severe weather conditions, where a number of options are presented for consultation.

Payment levels and inflationary uplifts

1.36 Finally, UR consults on the payment levels offered under each GSS regulation, and on the introduction of inflationary uplifts to these payments using a pre-set formula.

1.37 UR proposes to increase the payment amount offered for each GSS standard to bring the payments in line with those currently offered in GB, which have been further updated since UR's 2023 consultation was published.

1.38 UR also proposes the introduction of a system for inflationary uplifts that would allow GSS payments to stay economically relevant without requiring a full review of the GSS regime.

1.39 The payment amounts which have been proposed for each GSS standard in this paper have been set based on this methodology and, if implemented, would be subject to inflationary adjustments.

1.40 Further details on the payment levels associated with each GSS can be found under the relevant regulation in Chapter 8 - Consultation proposals.

1.41 Further details on the proposed inflationary uplift can be found in Chapter 7 – Payment levels and inflationary uplifts.

1.42 As part of this consultation, UR is consulting on the introduction of a standard for supply restoration in severe weather conditions. This includes seeking stakeholder views on how the costs of payments made for failure to meet this standard should be recovered if it is introduced. For clarification, the costs of making GSS payments for failure to meet any standard (other than potentially the proposed options for supply restoration in severe weather conditions included in this consultation), will not be recoverable from consumers. The purpose of GSS payments is to acknowledge the inconvenience caused to the consumer when the electricity company fails to deliver against a standard of performance for which it is reasonably expected to meet. UR is of the view that it would not be appropriate, nor incentivise company performance if customers ultimately had to fund a scheme for service underperformance.

2. Research and Stakeholder Engagement

Background

2.1 Articles 42 and 43B of the Electricity (NI) Order 1992 require UR to conduct research with a representative sample of consumers in Northern Ireland (including domestic and non-domestic) prior to reviewing both the electricity GSS and OSP requirements.

2.2 The legislation requires that UR arrange "for such research as the Authority considers appropriate with a view to discovering the views of a representative sample of persons likely to be affected" and to consider these results before prescribing new GSS and OSP respectively.

2.3 In advance of publishing the 2023 consultation, UR conducted research with a representative sample of both domestic and non-domestic consumers. This research was carried out between November 2020 and February 2021, to identify consumer expectations of utility companies, and to gather the opinion of those who were likely to be affected by the proposed changes to the GSS and OSP provisions.

2.4 A full summary of the 2021 research can be found in Chapter 4 of the 2023 consultation document. The full report, prepared by Perceptive Insight, was published with the 2023 consultation[10].

2.5 As a result of events of Storm Éowyn in January 2025 and the need to explore the role of the GSS during periods of severe weather, it was considered necessary to perform additional research with regards to consumer opinion on supply restoration in periods of severe weather. The proposed options for GSS provisions in periods of severe weather included in this paper are deemed of significant importance and could have material impact on both domestic and non-domestic consumers. This additional research has been completed to ensure that the views of consumers are adequately represented as part of this document. Further details on this research are included below.

2.6 In addition to the consumer research, UR also carried out a programme of stakeholder engagement. This included meeting with a range of stakeholders including non-domestic industry representatives, and consumer and voluntary group representatives, via UR's existing engagement forums. The purpose of these sessions was to understand

[10] Review of Electricity Guaranteed Standards of Service and Overall Standards of Performance | Utility Regulator

consumer experiences during Storm Éowyn and to explore views on the areas covered in the survey in further depth. Further information on the outcome of this engagement is included below.

2.7 The decision to complete additional consumer research and stakeholder engagement for this project not only complies with the legislation as referenced above but also demonstrates UR's commitment to delivering a robust and thorough review of the GSS Regulations and OSP Determinations, which are fit for purpose and reflect the needs of Northern Ireland consumers.

2025 research on provisions during severe weather

2.8 UR completed consumer research during July and August 2025, which specifically explored consumer experiences of interruptions to their electricity supply during periods of severe weather, and gathered consumer opinion regarding the provision of a GSS during such events.

2.9 This research was commissioned to enhance the research that was completed in 2021, and to acknowledge the fact that any changes made to the standards of service for periods of severe weather as a result of this consultation document could have a significant impact on domestic and non-domestic consumers across Northern Ireland.

2.10 UR commissioned the research company Cognisense to complete both the domestic and non-domestic research on its behalf. The domestic consumer research was completed as part of Cognisense's own existing monthly online Omnibus survey, and the non-domestic consumer research was completed as a telephone survey.

2.11 The research explored the consumer experience of a loss of electricity supply during periods of severe weather, the impact of this on their home or business, and what the consumer's priorities were during the period they were without electricity.

2.12 The research also sought the consumer view on whether a payment should be provided to those who were without electricity for longer than 24 hours due to severe weather, as an acknowledgement of the inconvenience caused, and who they felt should fund this payment. Consumers were also asked if they would be willing to pay extra on their electricity bill to fund the payment, and if so, how much extra would they be prepared to pay annually.

Domestic consumer survey findings

2.13 A total of 1,000 domestic consumers were surveyed online during July 2025.

2.14 The sample was representative of the Northern Ireland population with regards to age, sex, socio-economic group and geographical area. Disability status, caring responsibilities and numbers of respondents who were reliant on electricity for healthcare reasons were also monitored.

2.15 Of those who participated in the survey, 57% had experience of ever losing electricity to their home during severe weather or a storm.

2.16 Of those respondents who had ever lost supply during severe weather conditions, 60% had lost electricity to their home during Storm Éowyn. Those living in rural areas were more likely to have lost supply than those living in urban areas during Storm Éowyn (76% vs 50%).

2.17 Respondents were asked to rank what was most important to them during the period they were without power. 57% stated that getting their electricity back on was most important, 29% considered being kept informed of when they could expect their supply to be restored as most important, 6% felt being made aware of supports they could access in the area while without a supply was most important and 2% stated receiving compensation for the inconvenience was most important.

2.18 77% of participants agreed that electricity consumers who go without power due to storm damage for over 24 hours should be entitled to claim a payment in acknowledgement of the inconvenience caused. A further 6% disagreed and 17% neither agreed nor disagreed. Those living in a household with someone with a disability (79%) were slightly more likely than those without a disability in their household (75%) to agree that consumers should be entitled to claim such a payment. There were no significant differences between the views of rural and urban consumers with regards to this question.

2.19 If a payment was introduced for those who had lost electricity supply because of severe weather, 45% of respondents felt that this should be funded by NIE Networks, followed by 29% who stated such a payment such be funded by government. 15% of respondents stated that consumers (either all consumers, household consumers only or business consumers only) should fund the payment. A further 10% were not sure who should fund the payment.

2.20 If a payment was introduced, 62% reported that they would be unwilling to pay extra on their future electricity bills over a certain period of time, to fund a payment for consumers who were without power during severe weather, while 17% were willing to pay extra and 21% were unsure. Those living in a household with someone with a disability were more likely to be unwilling to pay extra (65%) than those without a disability in their household (61%). Those living in rural areas (64%) were more likely to be unwilling to pay extra than those living in urban areas (60%).

2.21 Of the 17% of respondents who stated that they would be willing to pay extra on their electricity bill to fund such a payment, the additional amounts they would be willing to pay annually were as follows[11]:

- 15% were willing to pay £1 to £5
- 39% were willing to pay £6 to £10
- 21% were willing to pay £11 to £20
- 11% were willing to pay £21 to £30
- 11% were willing to pay £31 to £50

2.22 In the event that they experienced a loss of electricity due to severe weather, 53% of respondents stated they would be likely to submit a claim for a payment to acknowledge the inconvenience caused.

Non-domestic consumer survey findings

2.23 A total of 204 non-domestic consumers were surveyed by telephone between July and August 2025.

2.24 Sample targets were set for employee size bands[12] and by industry type[13]. The geographical location of the business was also monitored.

2.25 While sample targets were met for small and medium employee size bands, this proved challenging to achieve for the large band with just over half of the target sample for this group being achieved. However, UR has been able to gather insight on the experiences and views of larger business through the stakeholder engagement sessions, with UR's Non-Domestic Forum and other consumer representatives taking part in these sessions (this is described in the next section).

2.26 39% of respondents reported that they had lost electricity at some stage during severe weather or a storm. Of these respondents, 51% had lost electricity during storm Éowyn.

2.27 When asked to rank what was most important to them during the period they were without electricity, 54% stated that the health and safety of their staff was most important. 23% stated the restoration of electricity was most important to their business. No respondents considered

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[11] A further 4% responded 'don't know.' Totals do not sum to 100% due to rounding.

[12] Employee size bands were categorised as follows: 0-9 (small), 9-49 (medium) and 50+(large).

[13] Industry types were categorised as follows: Manufacturing & motor trades, Construction, Professional and Business Services, Hospitality - Leisure, hotels and catering, Retail/Distribution/other services, Agriculture, Public Admin, and Community & Voluntary.

compensation for the inconvenience to be the most important factor during the period without power.

2.28 86% of respondents either strongly agreed or agreed that consumers without power for over 24 hours should be entitled to a payment for the inconvenience. Some 13% neither agreed nor disagreed while 1% disagreed with this statement.

2.29 If a payment was introduced for those who had lost electricity supply because of severe weather, 33% of respondents felt that the payment should be funded by all consumers (both domestic and non-domestic) followed by 32% who were of the view that such a payment such be funded by government. 26% thought that such a payment such be funded by NIE Networks and a further 9% felt the payment should be funded by non-domestic consumers only.

2.30 If a payment was introduced, 56% of respondents stated that they would be willing to pay extra on their future electricity bills for over a certain period of time to fund a payment for consumers who were without power during severe weather. A further 27% were unwilling to pay extra, while 17% stated they were unsure.

2.31 Of the 56% of respondents who stated that they would be willing to pay extra on their electricity bill to fund such a payment, the additional amounts they would be willing to pay annually were as follows[14]:

- 14% were willing to pay £1 to £20
- 71% were willing to pay £21 to £50
- 15% were willing to pay £51 to £200
- 1% were willing to pay £201 to £500

2.32 In the event that they experienced a loss of electricity due to severe weather, 82% of respondents stated they would be likely to submit a claim for a payment to acknowledge the inconvenience caused.

2.33 Copies of the full research reports for the domestic and non-domestic surveys are available in Annexes 3 and 4 to this consultation document.

[14] Totals do not sum to 100% due to rounding.

Stakeholder engagement

2.34 Throughout July and August 2025, UR met with a range of stakeholders to help understand the impact the proposals presented in this document may have on the consumers that they represent.

2.35 The purpose of these sessions was to understand the experiences across different consumer groups who lost electricity during Storm Éowyn (or during previous storms). Discussions also explored stakeholder opinions regarding the introduction of payments for those who experience loss of electricity during periods of severe weather, in recognition of the inconvenience caused.

Domestic consumer engagement

2.36 UR held a stakeholder engagement session with domestic consumer representative bodies on 30 July 2025. Representatives from the Consumer Council for Northern Ireland, National Energy Action, Disability Action and Advice NI attended.

2.37 During the session, discussion focused on consumer communication and support needs during Storm Éowyn and on views regarding payments.

2.38 Representatives largely felt that payments were a secondary issue. Consumers they represented were more concerned about receiving support at the time of need than "remedial action" after the storm. Updates on when supply was expected to be restored, access to essentials (including food, water and heat) and information on how to manage without electricity were the top priorities for consumers.

2.39 Representatives expressed concern that government had not learned lessons from the response to COVID and that as a region, we were not ready to react to a crisis. Stakeholders criticised the lack of co-ordination and leadership in providing support for the most vulnerable people, including those with disabilities living in rural areas.

2.40 Representatives advised that communication networks must be improved between government, NIE Networks and third sector organisations so that practical support can be delivered quickly, particularly as severe weather events become more common. The need for preparedness and a proactive approach was emphasised. It was highlighted that community resilience groups already exist to respond to severe weather events like flooding. These groups would be a valuable asset through which to coordinate and mobilise support for events such as electricity supply loss.

2.41 The need for access to a centralised data hub to enable identification of vulnerable individuals most at risk during a crisis was highlighted. It was noted that this should include data from health services on those who have equipment in their homes for medical purposes.

2.42 Representatives stated that the availability of additional support equipment such as generators needs to be known and addressed. It was proposed that a commissioning exercise should be completed by government using population data to estimate the number of generators needed during severe weather events. It was suggested also by another representative that the private sector could possibly play a role in the provision of generators and/or other supports such as food.

2.43 A representative spoke positively about information shared on social media by NIE Networks during Storm Éowyn with regards to the outages. However, it was noted that the information focused mainly on restoration. It was suggested that a bank of information should be prepared in advance of any such incidents in the future. This could include tips and advice on how to stay warm, accessing support and how to prepare for a storm (for example use of flashlights and mobile phone power banks). Collaboration between NIE Networks and third sector organisations on tips for managing during a storm was suggested.

2.44 Stakeholders stated that providing a payment is 'nice to do' but viewed it as a secondary issue to sharing advice, providing support and working together during a crisis. One representative stated that GSS does not need to be about paying people but should be about making sure that people have access to support and supplies when required.

2.45 In terms of severe weather GSS payments, stakeholders were uncertain about who should pay for such a scheme but were of the view that consumers should not pay for it.

2.46 The topic of home insurance was raised as a means of providing compensation. Stakeholders stated that not all domestic consumers will necessarily have home insurance for affordability reasons or those that live in rented accommodation. It was further added that making an insurance claim could see subsequent insurance premiums rise which could deter consumers from making a claim through their home insurance.

2.47 The issue of network resilience was raised by stakeholders. It was perceived that the network in Northern Ireland is less resilient than other parts of the UK and stakeholders queried why this would be the case. Another representative noted that building network resilience is the only way to get around this issue.

Non-domestic consumer engagement

2.48 UR held a stakeholder engagement session with non-domestic consumer representative bodies on 5 August 2025. Representatives from the Ulster Farmers Union, NI Chamber of Commerce[15], NI Food and Drink Association, the Consumer Council and a company who is a high energy user attended. In addition to this session, UR also received written feedback from a representative of Norbrook Laboratories.

2.49 Building the resilience of the network and provision of timely communications from NIE Networks during an outage were considered to be of primary importance by representatives, rather than a GSS payment scheme. It was stressed that businesses need a reliable and constant supply of electricity as interruption to this supply is the biggest cost to members.

2.50 Stakeholders questioned the benefits of payments to non-domestic consumers, taking into account the costs of interruption to businesses set against the potential value of a GSS payment. To demonstrate this, one stakeholder provided an example of a site that would incur £30,000 of losses if it stopped working for one hour due to supply loss.

2.51 It was raised by representatives that larger organisations often have a level of contingency built into their operations which include back up generation, as well as those in the agricultural sector who often have onsite generators, and as such would not benefit from a payment scheme.

2.52 However, it was suggested that payments would be beneficial to small and medium-sized businesses. It was noted that these businesses would not tend to have backup generators. It was raised that some small businesses would be more reliant on electricity than others, for example hairdressers.

2.53 Representatives were concerned that a payment scheme would ultimately increase energy costs for consumers and damage business competitiveness in Northern Ireland. Stakeholders stressed that making payments such as those being explored only takes money out of the system, and it would be more beneficial for this money to be reinvested into the electricity network to make it more robust. One representative stated that larger organisations will have to pick up the cost of a payment scheme.

[15] The NI Chamber of Commerce disclosed at the start of the meeting that NIE Networks are members of the CoC.

2.54 Some representatives voiced that a payment scheme would be welcomed provided that consumers' bills do not increase. It was suggested by some that the responsibility should lie with NIE Networks to pay, however, concerns were raised by others that these costs would ultimately be passed on to the consumer.

2.55 Stakeholders expressed that communication in terms of being provided with timelines for supply restoration was the main needs of their members during the storm and should remain a priority during severe weather events. Representatives commended the efforts of NIE Networks to communicate with businesses during Storm Éowyn and highlighted that such communications are of critical importance to allow for contingency planning. However, one representative, who is a high voltage energy user, was of the view that NIE Networks' 'Power Check' facility and the information sharing processes were designed more for the domestic consumer and felt that there was an information gap for those who use the high-voltage network.

2.56 One representative stated that their members were calling for support beyond communications during Storm Éowyn. This was mostly for information about public safety, staff safety, risks and help with union engagement.

2.57 The topic of business insurance was raised during discussion. Representatives stated that insurance is a complex area, as while most will have business interruption insurance, it would be a nuanced commercial decision as to when to trigger this as such would increase premiums for the following years.

3. Impact Assessments

Equality Considerations

3.1 As a public authority, UR has a number of obligations arising from Section 75 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998[16]. These obligations concern the promotion of equality of opportunity between:

- persons of different religious belief, political opinion, racial group, age, marital status or sexual orientation;
- men and women generally;
- persons with disability and persons without; and
- persons with dependants and persons without.

3.2 UR must also have regard to the promotion of good relations between persons of different religious belief, political opinion or racial groups. In the development of its policies UR also has a statutory duty to have due regard to the needs of vulnerable consumers which may include individuals who are disabled or chronically sick, individuals of pensionable age, individuals with low incomes and individuals residing in rural areas. Some of the above equality categories will therefore overlap with these vulnerable groupings.

3.3 An equality screen has been completed by UR and can be found in Annex 6 of this paper.

3.4 We consider that the consultation proposals on the GSS and OSP should not be subject to an Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA) as the GSS and OSP will apply equally to all consumers. We have no evidence to suggest that any Section 75 Category will be negatively affected.

3.5 However, we would request that respondents provide comments on any equality impacts of the proposed electricity GSS and OSP and provide any information or evidence in relation to the needs, experiences, issues and priorities for different groups which you feel are relevant to the implementation of any of the proposals.

3.6 The equality screen will be reviewed and updated following this consultation and in advance of the decision paper. All responses will be considered before making a final decision on whether an EQIA is required.

[16] Northern Ireland Act 1998 (legislation.gov.uk)

Regulatory Impact Assessment

3.7 A Regulatory Impact Assessment (RIA) has been developed by UR and DfE to consider the potential economic impacts of the proposed changes to the electricity GSS and OSP. This is at the development stage, and the RIA is included under Annex 5 of this paper.

3.8 As part of this consultation, UR would invite estimates from electricity companies and from businesses of key monetised costs and benefits expected from the implementation of the proposed requirements. We also invite views on key non-monetised costs and benefits.

3.9 The development stage RIA will be updated and finalised following the consultation and in advance of the decision paper.

Rural Needs Impact Assessment

3.10 A Rural Needs Impact Assessment (RNIA) has been completed by DfE to consider the potential impacts of the proposed changes on those living in rural areas. The RNIA is included under Annex 7 of this paper.

3.11 As part of this consultation, UR and DfE would welcome views, information or evidence in relation to the impact of the proposals on those living in rural areas.

3.12 The RNIA will be reviewed and updated by DfE following the consultation and in advance of the decision paper.

Consultation Questions

3.13 We ask that consultees respond to the following questions:

Q1: Do respondents think that the proposed GSS and OSP will have no negative impact on the groups listed? Please provide evidence.

Q2: With regards to the Regulatory Impact Assessment, what do respondents consider the key costs and benefits (both monetary and non-monetary) from the implementation of the proposed GSS and OSP are likely to be? Please provide evidence.

Q3: Do respondents wish to add any views in relation to the impact of the proposed GSS and OSP on those living in rural areas? Please provide evidence.

4. Clarification of current GSS responsibilities

Background

4.1 The 2023 consultation proposed to update the GSS and OSP standards for the electricity distribution company and to introduce GSS for electricity suppliers in Northern Ireland for the first time. It was UR's understanding at the time of the consultation that the existing electricity GSS did not apply to electricity suppliers.

4.2 However, since the consultation closed, we have reviewed the scope and application of the GSS Regulations and confirm that they currently also apply to electricity suppliers, and not only to the Distribution Network Operator. This is consistent with UR's current understanding of the legal position. This paper therefore corrects the position set out in the 2023 consultation and provides confirmation on the standards that are currently applicable to suppliers.

4.3 The existing GSS Regulations currently apply to either the electricity distributor, the electricity supplier, or both, where applicable. We explain further below.

4.4 The GSS Regulations were made in 1993 and last amended in 1999 and when made/amended they applied to (and only to) the 'public electricity supplier'. This was defined in the Electricity Order, in the form it was in force at the time as meaning any person holding an electricity supply licence. There was only person who held a supply licence at the time, namely NIE plc. The GSS Regulations therefore applied to it alone.

4.5 In 2007, the electricity supply market was opened up to competition and various legislative amendments were made to facilitate competition in supply and other changes to the electricity market.

4.6 The legislative changes included, among other things, amendments made under Regulation 4 of the Electricity Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2007[17] (the **2007 Regulations**) which deleted the terms 'public electricity supplier' and 'public electricity supply licence' and introduced the terms 'electricity distributor' and 'electricity supplier'.

4.7 Under and in accordance with the 2007 Regulations:

[17] Regulation 4 - Electricity Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2007

- NIE's public electricity supply licence was transferred (via a licensing scheme) to the company that is now Power NI (at the time a subsidiary of NIE plc) such that it had effect as an electricity supply licence (and no longer therefore a public electricity licence).

- NIE's distribution activities were authorised (and therefore regulated) under its electricity transmission licence (as amended accordingly)[18].

4.8 With regard to the application of the GSS Regulations, Regulation 63 of the 2007 Regulations[19] provides that, after Regulation 4 comes into operation, references to 'public electricity suppliers' made in any statutory provision shall have effect as if they were references to:

- Electricity suppliers;

- Electricity distributors;

- Both electricity suppliers and electricity distributors

within the meaning of the Electricity Order (as amended by the 2007 Regulations) according to the nature of the activities carried out by the persons to whom they referred before that time.

4.9 The GSS Regulations are a statutory provision. Therefore, any provision in them which refers to 'public electricity supplier' is to read as a reference to either electricity supplier, electricity distributor, or both electricity supplier and electricity distributor, as informed by whether the activities are supply or distribution activities (or both).

4.10 As noted earlier in paragraph 1.26, statutory responsibility for meter provision (and maintenance etc.) is placed on electricity suppliers (other than where supplier agrees to the consumer providing their own meter). Accordingly, the activity of meter provision and maintenance is a supply activity.

4.11 In the 2023 consultation paper, UR had proposed to introduce GSS Regulations for electricity suppliers for the first time. However, this should now be considered as proposed updates and additions to the existing GSS Regulations that are already currently applicable to suppliers.

4.12 The proposed updates will ensure that the GSS Regulations applicable to suppliers are fit for purpose and have an appropriate level of payment in recognition of the inconvenience caused for consumers.

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[18] The electricity transmission licence was later (under and in accordance with the Gas and Electricity (Internal Markets) Regulations (Northen Ireland) 2011 split into separate electricity distribution and transmission licences.

[19] Regulation 63 - Electricity Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2007

4.13 Regulation 63 only applies to a statutory provision and therefore does not extend to OSP. OSPs are a Determination which are made by UR using a different legislative pathway. Following its consideration of responses to the consultation, UR will consider whether to proceed to make any new Determinations under Article 43 and 43A of the Electricity Order which, if made, will specify OSPs that are applicable to the electricity distributor and those which are applicable to electricity suppliers.

Current GSS applicable to electricity suppliers

4.14 The existing GSS that are currently applicable to suppliers include:

- Regulation 5 – Providing a Supply
- Regulation 6 – Estimate of Charges
- Regulation 8A – Meter Disputes
- Regulation 8B – Prepayment Meters
- Regulation 9 – Charges and Payments
- Regulation 10 – Appointments
- Regulation 11 – Notice of Rights
- Regulation 12 – Disputes
- Regulation 13 – Payments
- Regulation 14 – Exemptions
- Regulation 15 – Timing of Notification

4.15 Of the Regulations above, Regulations 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14 and 15 are also currently applicable to the electricity distributor.

4.16 The new Complaints standard, as proposed in the 2023 consultation, will apply to both the electricity distributor and electricity suppliers.

4.17 A full list of the GSS that are applicable to suppliers including details of how the standard should be met and the proposed payment can be found in Annex 1.

5. Metering

Background

5.1 As outlined in the introduction to this consultation, UR has reviewed the scope and application of the GSS Regulations and OSP Determinations with regards to metering related activities and clarifies that responsibility for providing and maintaining an electricity meter is (unless the supplier agrees with the consumer that the meter is to be provided by the consumer) the statutory legal obligation of the electricity supplier, not NIE Networks.

5.2 The GSS Regulations and OSP Determinations need to be updated to ensure that they are fit for purpose, reflect the applicable legislation, and that any provision related to a metering activity is clearly defined as the responsibility of the electricity supplier.

Metering arrangements

5.3 Where an electricity consumer is to be charged by reference to the amount of electricity supplied to them, that supply has to be given through an appropriate meter. The statutory responsibility (as set out in Schedule 7 to the Electricity Order) for providing and maintaining an appropriate meter lies, unless the supplier agrees that the meter may be provided by the consumer, with the electricity supplier. This has been the position since privatisation, i.e. that it is a supplier's responsibility and accordingly a supply activity.

5.4 At present, under industry wide arrangements, NIE Networks is known as the 'common services provider' for electricity and undertakes the activities of meter provision, meter maintenance and meter reading, for and on behalf electricity suppliers. It does so under relevant contractual arrangements with electricity suppliers, including Distribution Use of System Agreements and the Market Registration Framework Agreement (under which the Market Registration Code is given contractual force).

5.5 However, Schedule 7 to the Electricity Order[20] confirms that it is the consumer's electricity supplier that has the legal responsibility for providing the meter and ensuring that the meter is operating correctly.

5.6 To date, and as per the 2023 consultation, UR and the industry has proceeded on the basis that all of the existing and any of the new proposed metering related standards are, or are to be, the responsibility

[20] Schedule 7 - The Electricity (Northern Ireland) Order 1992

of NIE Networks. This is an incorrect application, and the metering related standards are (or, in the case of the new proposed standards, are to be) the responsibility of electricity suppliers.

5.7 The GSS Regulations impacted by this legislation are as follows:

- Meter disputes
- Prepayment meters
- Metering errors
- Provision of supply
- Estimate of charges

5.8 The OSP Determinations impacted by this legislation are as follows:

- Moving of meters
- Change of meter
- Meter reading

5.9 As the statutory responsibility is set out in the Electricity Order, DfE are currently reviewing the legislation in relation to metering responsibilities. If any amendments to this legislation are required, this would be for DfE to decide and action.

Proposed updates to metering GSS

5.10 The 2023 consultation proposed to update the existing metering related Regulations as well as proposing to introduce a new regulation for metering errors. At the time of the consultation, it was understood that these would be the responsibility of the electricity distributor.

5.11 The consultation also proposed to introduce a responsibility on electricity suppliers in respect of these Regulations.

5.12 However, as clarified earlier, the GSS that currently apply to metering related activities are the responsibility of the electricity supplier. The new proposals are laid out below. A summary can also be found in Annex 1.

5.13 The payment amounts which have been proposed for each GSS standard in this chapter have been set to the level currently offered to GB consumers and, if implemented, would be subject to inflationary adjustments. This methodology is presented in Chapter 7.

Meter disputes

5.14 This regulation is currently applicable to the electricity supplier. The proposed amendment is to also introduce requirements for the electricity distributor for this standard.

Current Regulation

5.15 This regulation applies when the electricity supplier is informed by the customer that their meter has been operating outside of the margins of error, or a circumstance exists where the electricity supplier reasonably expects that the meter is operating outside of the margins of error.

5.16 This regulation requires that the electricity supplier, once notified, must meet the following standards:

a) If a visit to the consumer's premises is required to investigate the meter problem, the electricity supplier must offer an appointment for this purpose within 7 working days;

b) The electricity supplier must ensure it attends this appointment during the specified time; and

c) If a visit to the consumer premises is not required, the electricity supplier must offer an explanation of the probable reason for the meter issue within 5 working days.

5.17 If any of the above standards are not met, a payment of £25 is due to any domestic or non-domestic consumer affected.

Amended Consultation Proposal

5.18 We propose to retain this standard for electricity suppliers and to add a new obligation for the electricity distributor.

5.19 It is proposed that this regulation applies when the electricity supplier is informed by the customer that their meter has been operating outside of the margins of error, or a circumstance exists where the electricity supplier reasonably expects that the meter is operating outside of the margins of error.

5.20 Once notified, the electricity supplier must meet the standards as described in paragraph 5.16 above. If it fails to meet any of the standards, a payment of £40 is due from the electricity supplier to any domestic or non-domestic consumer affected.

5.21 For the electricity distributor, it is proposed that this regulation applies where the customer informs the electricity distributor of a meter issue as described in paragraph 5.15 above. The electricity distributor must then report this meter problem to the electricity supplier within 1 working day. If the electricity distributor does not inform the electricity supplier within this timeframe, a payment of £40 is due from the electricity distributor to any domestic or non-domestic consumer affected.

5.22 Once notified by the electricity distributor, the electricity supplier would then be required to resolve the issue as specified in paragraph 5.16.

Prepayment meters

5.23 This regulation is currently applicable to the electricity supplier. The proposed amendment is to also introduce requirements for the electricity distributor for this standard.

Current Regulation

5.24 This regulation applies when the electricity supplier is informed (during working hours) by the consumer that their prepayment meter is not operating so as to permit a supply to the customer's premises in the manner in which it is designed to do, or if circumstances suggest that the prepayment meter is not so operating.

5.25 This regulation requires the electricity supplier to deal with a problem with a customer's prepayment meter within 3 hours of being informed during a working day and 4 hours on any other day.

5.26 If not, a payment of £25 is due to any domestic or non-domestic consumer affected.

Amended Consultation Proposal

5.27 We propose to retain this standard for suppliers and to add a new obligation for the electricity distributor.

5.28 It is proposed that this regulation applies when the electricity supplier is informed (during working hours) by the customer that their prepayment meter is not operating as to permit a supply to the customer's premises in the manner in which it is designed to do, or if circumstances exist suggesting that the prepayment meter is not operating.

5.29 The electricity supplier must arrange for and ensure that an appropriate person[21] attends the premises where the prepayment meter is installed in order to repair or replace the prepayment meter within 3 hours of being informed during a working day and 4 hours on any other day. If not a

[21] "appropriate person" is defined within the GSS Regulations as 'a person employed or authorised by a supplier to restore the supply where the supplier's fuse has operated'.

payment of £40 is due to any domestic or non-domestic consumer affected.

5.30 For the electricity distributor, it is proposed that this regulation applies where a customer informs their electricity distributor of an issue as described above, the electricity distributor must report this to the electricity supplier within 3 hours during a working day and 4 hours on any other day. If the electricity distributor does not inform the electricity supplier within this timeframe, a payment of £40 is due to any domestic or non-domestic consumer affected.

5.31 Once notified by the electricity distributor, the electricity supplier would then be required to adhere to the requirements specified in paragraph 5.29.

5.32 Where information is received outside of working hours it shall be deemed to have been received at the commencement of the next following period of working hours. A definition of 'working hours' is included in Chapter 10 under the Timing of Notification GSS standard.

Metering errors

5.33 This proposed regulation will be applicable to the electricity suppliers and the electricity distributor.

Consultation Proposal

5.34 It is proposed that this regulation applies where a customer is billed an incorrect amount by their electricity supplier as a result of the supplier calculating the amount billed by reference to an incorrect meter reading or incorrect meter calibration.

5.35 Once informed, it is proposed that the electricity supplier would be required to make a payment of £40 to any domestic or non-domestic consumer affected.

5.36 For the electricity distributor, it is proposed that this regulation applies where a customer informs their electricity distributor of an issue as described in paragraph 5.34 above, the electricity distributor must report this to the electricity supplier within 1 working day. If not a payment of £40 is due to any domestic or non-domestic consumer affected.

5.37 Once notified by the electricity distributor, the electricity supplier would then be required to make a payment as per paragraph 5.35.

Provision of supply

5.38 This standard applies to the electricity supplier only.

Current Regulation

5.39 This regulation currently applies where a customer has requested the installation of a meter, and it is necessary for the electricity supplier to visit the customer's premises to install the appropriate meter and enable supply to be provided.

5.40 Once all information and necessary payment has been provided by the customer, the electricity supplier must:

a) For domestic consumers, make an appointment to install a meter and turn on supply within 2 working days. If not, a payment of £25 is due.

b) For non-domestic consumers, make an appointment to install a meter and turn on supply within 4 working days. If not, a payment of £25 is due.

c) For non-domestic consumers, make an appointment for the part of the day requested by the consumer. If not, a payment of £25 is due.

d) For all consumers, attend the appointment for the time or part of day that was agreed. If not, a payment of £50 is due to any domestic consumer and £125 for any non-domestic consumer affected.

Amended Consultation Proposal

5.41 We propose to retain this standard in its existing form and, as outlined earlier in this chapter, clarify that this standard would be the responsibility of the electricity supplier to deliver. We also propose to increase the payment amounts under subparagraphs a) to c) above from £25 to £40.

Estimate of charges

5.42 This standard applies to the electricity supplier only.

Current Regulation

5.43 This regulation applies where a customer has requested an estimate of the costs associated with connection to the distribution system or the altering of the position of a meter.

5.44 Once all information and necessary payment has been provided by the customer, the electricity supplier must provide a cost estimate for a new electricity supply within 7 working days (small jobs) or 15 working days (larger jobs).

5.45 If not, a payment of £50 is due to any domestic or non-domestic consumer affected.

Amended Consultation Proposal

5.46 We propose to retain this standard in its existing form and, as outlined earlier in this chapter, clarify that this standard would be the responsibility of the electricity supplier to deliver.

Proposed updates to metering OSP

5.47 The 2023 consultation proposed to retain the existing OSP for the electricity distributor. The consultation also proposed to introduce OSP for all electricity suppliers.

5.48 However, as clarified earlier in this document, OSP that apply to metering related activities will need to be the responsibility of the electricity supplier. The new proposals are laid out below. A summary can also be found in Annex 2.

Moving of meters

5.49 This proposed standard is applicable to electricity suppliers only.

Current Standard

5.50 This standard currently requires the repositioning of a customer's meter on their meter board within 15 working days of the quotation being accepted.

5.51 This standard should be met in 100% of cases.

Amended Consultation Proposal

5.52 It is proposed that the electricity supplier is responsible for repositioning a customer's meter on their meter board within 15 working days of a quotation being accepted.

5.53 This standard should be met in 100% of cases.

Change of meter

5.54 This proposed standard is applicable to electricity suppliers only.

Current Standard

5.55 This standard currently requires that a customer's meter is changed within 10 days of notification that the customer's new tariff requires a new meter to be installed at their home.

5.56 This standard should be met in 100% of cases.

Amended Consultation Proposal

5.57 It is proposed that this standard applies if a customer's new tariff requires a new meter installed at their home. The electricity supplier will be responsible for changing the meter within 10 working days.

5.58 This standard should be met in 100% of cases.

Meter reading

5.59 This proposed standard is applicable to electricity suppliers only.

Current Standard

5.60 This standard currently requires that a meter reading is obtained for 99.5% of customers once a year.

Amended Consultation Proposal

5.61 This proposed standard would require the electricity supplier to get a meter reading for 99.5% of customers once a year.

Consultation Questions

Q4: Do respondents agree with the amended proposed metering GSS for electricity suppliers presented in this chapter? Please provide evidence to support your response.

Q5: Do respondents agree with the amended proposed metering OSP for electricity suppliers presented in this chapter? Please provide evidence to support your response.

Q6: Do respondents agree with the amended proposed metering GSS for electricity distribution presented in this chapter? Please provide evidence to support your response.

Q7: Do respondents agree with the amended proposed metering OSP for electricity distribution presented in this chapter? Please provide evidence to support your response.

6. Supply restoration in severe weather conditions

Background

6.1 The 2023 consultation proposed to introduce a GSS for supply restoration that would apply during severe weather conditions. The GSS consulted upon was informed by the standards for supply restoration which were in place in the GB Regulations at the time of consultation[22]. UR also proposed to introduce specific exemptions for this standard which were also informed by the GB Regulations.

6.2 Following on from Storm Éowyn, a working group was established comprising of DfE, NIE Networks and UR to consider the options available to facilitate the provision of payments to consumers who had lost power due to the severe weather. One of the outworkings of the group was a commitment for UR to revisit the supply restoration GSS regulation to specifically consult on the suitability of providing a GSS that would apply during severe weather.

6.3 The DfE Energy Strategy Action Plan for 2025, published in March 2025, has included the action "The NI Utility Regulator will consult on amendments to the Electricity Guaranteed Standards of Service, including in relation to incidents of adverse weather"[23].

6.4 As a result, UR is presenting options for introducing a standard for supply restoration in periods of severe weather, for stakeholders to consider and provide their feedback on as part of this consultation. Proposed updates to the standard for supply restoration in normal weather conditions from the 2023 consultation are unchanged. These are summarised in Chapter 8.

6.5 The options presented have been informed by the current and previous electricity supply restoration standards in GB and by Ofcom's 'delayed repair following loss of service compensation scheme'. The value of payments that would be made to consumers differs across each option.

6.6 The payment amounts which have been proposed for each GSS standard in this chapter would be subject to inflationary adjustments, if implemented as part of this consultation. This methodology is presented in Chapter 7.

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[22] The Electricity (Standards of Performance) Regulations 2015
[23] Energy Strategy - The Path to Net Zero Energy - Action Plan 2025

6.7 The proposed exemptions that would apply to these standards are set out in Chapter 9.

NIE Networks resilience workstream

6.8 In response to the unprecedented impact of Storm Éowyn, NIE Networks is reviewing measures it might take to improve both the resilience of the network and improve the response to consumers if a similar event occurred in the future. When UR discussed Storm Éowyn with consumer representative bodies, their views were that investing to reduce storm impact and to improve support to consumers, particularly vulnerable consumers, was as important, or more important, than future GSS payments.

6.9 NIE Networks has completed the first stage of its assessment of work that is required. It has proposed accelerating a long-term programme of tree cutting on the 11kV main line overhead network to reduce the impact of future storm events. Evidence from Storm Éowyn shows that completing this work would see a significant reduction in interruptions if a similar event occurred in future. The proposal would bring forward investment of circa £20m planned for the longer term and complete this by March 2031. To pay for this investment, an average domestic bill would be around £1.50 greater at the end of RP7 than it would otherwise have been.

6.10 We have considered NIE Networks proposal to bring forward investment in light of Storm Éowyn and we have concluded that it is well founded. We will now consult separately on the licence modifications necessary to allow NIE Networks to fund this work. Our consultation on licence modifications will provide further information on the reasons and effects of the company’s proposal including costs and impacts.

Options for supply restoration in severe weather

6.11 The options for introducing a standard for supply restoration in periods of severe weather presented for consultation are:

1. No change to the existing standard. This option:

   (i) Retains the existing GSS regulation for supply restoration in normal weather conditions and does not introduce a specific standard that would apply during periods of severe weather.

2. Implement the GB Regulations as they were in 2015. This option:

   (i) Would implement a standard which has been informed by the previous GB Regulations and was consulted upon in UR’s 2023 paper.

3. Implement the current GB Regulations. This option:

    (i) Would implement a standard which has been informed by the current GB supply restoration standards for periods of severe weather, that came into force on 1 November 2024.

4. Implement a 'delayed repair following loss of service' scheme. This option:

    (i) Would implement a standard which has been informed by the Ofcom 'delayed repair following loss of service compensation scheme'.

6.12 Respondents are invited to share their views on the standards presented in this chapter. For options 2 to 4 above, respondents are also asked to share their views on how these standards, if implemented, should be funded. UR are seeking stakeholder views on their preferred approach along with evidence to support their response.

6.13 For clarification, while we are seeking stakeholder views on how GSS payments for supply restoration in severe weather conditions (if introduced) should be funded, for all other GSS payments, costs will not recovered from consumers. The purpose of GSS payments is to acknowledge the inconvenience caused to the consumer when the electricity company fails to deliver against a standard of performance for which it is reasonably expected to meet. UR is of the view that it would not be appropriate, nor incentivise company performance if customers ultimately had to fund a scheme for service underperformance.

6.14 To inform consultation responses, analysis has been completed against each option to estimate the effects if that option had been in place during previous storms over the last five years, including Storm Éowyn.

6.15 The analysis against each option presents:

- The total number of consumers who would have been eligible for a GSS payment following each storm.
- The amounts these consumers would have received.
- The estimated costs to NIE Networks of providing a payment during these storms (calculated as the total value of payments plus the costs to administer these payments). Estimates are presented both with and without the application of a severe weather cost recovery threshold, as outlined in paragraph 6.17.

- The impact on domestic and non-domestic tariffs, if these costs were recovered entirely from consumer charges. This includes the impact on consumer bills if all consumers received a payment and costs were recovered entirely from both domestic and non-domestic consumers. The analysis also looks at the impact if only domestic consumers received a payment and if those costs were recovered from domestic consumers only.

6.16 If only domestic consumers were to receive and pay for a GSS payment, the overall costs incurred used in the analysis would need to be adjusted to remove those payments that would have been made to non-domestic consumers. We were unable to identify the exact split in the number of domestic and non-domestic consumers who would have been eligible for a payment during previous storms. To provide an indication of the impact, we have assumed that 91%[24] of the payments would have been made to domestic consumers. This figure is based on UR's Retail Energy Market Monitoring (REMM) data which shows the split between domestic and non-domestic electricity connections. Therefore, the total costs (incl. admin) have been adjusted in the analysis to reflect this.

6.17 UR is also consulting on the introduction of a severe weather cost recovery threshold for NIE Networks. Currently in GB, the costs of providing a GSS payment during periods of severe weather are paid for by the electricity distributor, up to an amount which is capped by a severe weather threshold. Any costs incurred beyond this threshold are recovered via consumer charges[25]. Following analysis of historic storm reports, we propose that this threshold be set at £1m for NIE Networks for each regulatory year.

6.18 The analysis in this chapter does not make any projections with regards to the severity, frequency or costs impact of future storms. Future financial and tariff impacts of each option, if implemented, are unknown.

6.19 In addition to the analysis, research and stakeholder engagement with domestic and non-domestic consumers has been completed as presented in Chapter 3. Stakeholders may wish to refer to this research to further inform their responses.

Option 1: No change to existing standard

6.20 The current supply restoration standard allows 24 hours for supply to be restored following a fault, after which a GSS payment is triggered. The

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[24] REMM Transparency Reports 2025 | Utility Regulator

[25] Special Condition 4.4 of the Electricity Distribution Licence provides the methodology for the 'Severe Weather Supply Restoration Term' which calculates the threshold up to which the electricity distributor must fund GSS payments in severe weather.

current standard is subject to exemptions, most notably the severe weather exemption. In periods of severe weather, as defined in NIE Network's Distribution Licence[26], NIE Networks can apply for an exemption to making GSS payments, if they meet the criteria.

6.21 This option would not introduce a standard for supply restoration in severe weather conditions. The existing supply restoration standard would continue to apply and would continue to be subject to the severe weather exemption clause. For clarity, this would mean that there would be no mechanism within the legislation for any payments to be made in periods of severe weather, if NIE Networks meet the exemption criteria.

Option 2: 2015 GB Regulations (consulted upon in 2023)

6.22 This option has been informed by the standard that was in place in GB between 2015 and 2024 and was the option UR previously consulted on in the 2023 consultation.

6.23 This option would introduce a GSS standard for supply restoration in severe weather conditions. This would be introduced in addition to the existing standard for supply restoration in normal weather conditions.

6.24 This standard would introduce three categories of severe weather events as follows:

- Category 1 (medium events) includes:

    (i) lightning events – where there are at least 8 times the daily average amount of faults in a 24 hour period affecting less than the category 3 threshold number of customers (as defined by paragraph 6.25 of this paper); and

    (ii) non-lightning events – where there are between 8 and 13 times the daily average amount of faults in a 24 hour period affecting less than the category 3 threshold number[27] of customers.

    For category 1 events supply is to be restored within 24 hours.

- Category 2 (large events) includes:

[26] Severe weather is defined on Page 12 of NIE Networks' licence as when the number of incidents affecting the distribution high voltage network linked to severe weather conditions reaches 13 times the average daily fault rate within a 24 hour period. At such times, NIE Networks can apply for an exemption to the GSS Regulations. The exemption does not apply automatically and whether or not it applies to the consumer's claim must be assessed on a case by case basis.

[27] In GB each designated electricity distributor has its own threshold number of customers specified in the table in Schedule 2 of the 2015 GB Regulations.

(i) non-lightning events where there are at least 13 times the daily average amount of faults in a 24 hour period affecting less than the category 3 threshold number of customers.

In category 2 events supply is to be restored within 48 hours.

- Category 3 (very large events):

(i) applies to all severe weather events in which faults on the distribution system interrupt a number of customers above a specified threshold number.

(ii) Supply is to be restored in a period as calculated by the following formula:

$$\textit{Length of time before payment due (hrs)} = 48 \times \left(\frac{\textit{Total number of customers interrupted}}{\textit{Category 3 threshold number of customers}}\right)^2$$

6.25 The category 3 threshold is defined as any severe weather event where 35% or more of exposed customers are affected. Exposed customers are defined as customers supplied by mixed or overhead higher voltage circuits (i.e. those customers that may be affected by a severe weather event)[28].

6.26 The effect of applying the category 3 threshold would be that if the number of consumers affected was greater than 35% of exposed customers, then the time period for restoration before a payment would be due would be greater than 48 hours. In these circumstances, the number of customers due a GSS payment would therefore be fewer than if the category 3 threshold did not apply[29]. The number of NIE Network's customers who meet the definition of 'exposed customers' was not available to UR at the time of consultation. Therefore, we were unable to determine if this threshold was exceeded during any previous storms and as a result it has not been applied to the analysis presented.

6.27 If there is a failure by the electricity distributor to meet the standard, in relation to all categories of severe weather events, a payment of £70 would be due to any domestic or non-domestic consumer affected. For each subsequent period of 12 hours after the initial prescribed period has

[28] Revised standards of performance arrangements for electricity distributors - Consultation on the draft Statutory Instrument for Guaranteed Standards and revocation of the Overall Standards of Performance | Ofgem

[29] For illustrative purposes only (not applicable to Northern Ireland). If the category 3 threshold was 100,000 and 110,000 customers lost supply, then the length of time to restore power before customers would be eligible for a payment would be 58 hours. If there was no category 3 threshold, then the length of time before customers would be due a payment would be 48 hours. The effect of this would be that more consumers would be eligible for a payment if the category 3 threshold was not in place.

passed, an additional payment of £70 would be payable, subject to a maximum cap of £700. This level of payment aligns with the payment levels for when this standard was in place in GB.

6.28 Table 6.1 summarises the total number of consumers who would have been eligible for a GSS payment if Option 2 had been applicable over the previous five years, the total value of these payments for each storm and the indicative one-off increase to the typical domestic consumer bill (if costs were recovered from consumers).

6.29 The one-off increase is the additional amount that would be applied to a typical domestic consumer bill to recover the costs of the GSS payments for each storm (including admin costs). The additional annual amount on the consumer bill would depend on the period over which these costs were recovered. For illustrative purposes, this table presents the impact if recovered over one tariff year (this would be less if recovered over a longer period).

Table 6.1: Option 2 - Overall value of payments and domestic consumer bill impact (2020/21 to 2024/25)

Year	Storm	Number of domestic and non-domestic consumers eligible for a payment	Total value of payments made by NIE Networks	Total costs (inc. admin) to NIE Networks	One-off increase on typical domestic bill (all consumers receive and pay)	One-off increase on typical domestic bill (domestic only receive and pay)
2020/21	-	-	-	-	-	-
2021/22	Franklin	0	-	-	-	-
2022/23	-	-	-	-	-	-
2023/24	Isha	600	£70,000	£92,000	£0.06	£0.10
2024/25	Darragh	700	£64,000	£89,000	£0.05	£0.10
	Éowyn	57,400	£15,414,000	£17,414,000	£10.00	£20.00

Note 1: Numbers of consumers have been rounded to the nearest 100.

Note 2: Total value of payments and total costs have been rounded to the nearest £1,000.

Note 3: Estimated increase on the typical domestic consumer bill has been rounded to the nearest £5. Very small estimated increases are unrounded.

Note 4: For the 'one-off increase on typical domestic bill (domestic only pay)' column, the total costs (incl. admin) on which these estimates are based have been adjusted as per paragraph 6.16.

6.30 If NIE Networks were responsible for fully funding GSS payments and the associated administrative costs for storms over the previous five years, the costs would have ranged between £89,000 for Storm Darragh to £17,414,000 for Storm Éowyn.

6.31 If the proposed severe weather cost recovery threshold had been in place over the previous five years, then this threshold would only have been exceeded during Storm Éowyn. For all other storms, costs of GSS payment related costs would have been fully funded by NIE Networks.

6.32 If Option 2 had been in place between 2020 and 2025 and the severe weather cost recovery threshold had been applicable, NIE Networks would have paid £1.1m and £16.5m would have been paid for by consumers over this five year period.[30] The impact on consumer bills would have been:

- A one-off additional £10 following Storm Éowyn if costs were recovered from all consumers.
- A one-off additional £20[31] following Storm Éowyn if costs were recovered from domestic consumers only.

6.33 Table 6.2 breaks down the number of eligible consumers and the value of payments that consumers would have received if Option 2 had been in place during Storm Éowyn, depending on how long it took for their supply to be restored.

[30] £92,000 would have been paid by NIE Networks in 2023/24 and £1,000,000 in 2024/25. The remainder would have been paid by consumers. Figures in paragraph 6.312 have been rounded to the nearest £0.1m.

[31] Costs have been rounded to the nearest £5.

Table 6.2: Option 2 - Storm Éowyn payment schedule

Day	Time period of supply restoration	Number of consumers eligible for payment	Value of payment per consumer
1	Restored within 24 Hours	N/A	£0
2	Restored within 48 Hours	N/A	£0
3	Restored between 48-72 hrs	25,000	£70-£140
4	Restored between 72-96 hrs	14,000	£210-£280
5	Restored between 96-120 hrs	8,000	£350-£420
6	Restored between 120-144 hrs	4,000	£490-£560
7	Restored between 144-168 hrs	2,000	£630-£700
8-11	Restored between 168-264 hrs	3,000	£700 (cap)

Note 1: Numbers of consumers have been rounded to the nearest 1,000.

Note 2: The value of payments made to each consumer are not impacted by the cost recovery threshold. Payment amounts would be the same whether a cost recovery threshold was in place or not.

6.34 The value of payments that would have been received by those eligible would have ranged between £70 and £700. 44% of those eligible for a payment would have received between £70 and £140.

6.35 Table 6.3 presents the estimated tariff impacts across different consumer groups, if GSS payments for only Storm Éowyn were fully recovered from all consumers[32].

[32] The table looks at Storm Éowyn only as bill impacts for previous storms were negligible.

Table 6.3: Option 2 - Estimated impact on tariffs for Storm Éowyn

Consumer Group	Number of consumers	Typical kWh/a	Total additional T&D	Bill Impact (one-off increase £)	Bill Impact p/kwh
Domestic	850,729	3.4	£9,017,000	£10	0.3
Small Business	72,833	16.4	£3,137,000	£40	0.3
SME, LV	5,363	275	£3,424,000	£640	0.2
SME, HV	226	1,593	£480,000	£2,120	0.1
LEU, HV	204	5,457	£988,000	£4,840	0.1
LEU, 33kv	18	31,075	£169,000	£9,400	0.03

Note 1: The increase to the domestic consumer bill is the additional amount (£) that would be added to the Transmission & Distribution (T&D) element of the consumer bill as a one-off increase. These estimates have been rounded to the nearest £1,000.

Note 2: Bill impacts are presented as the additional one-off increase as it would impact the typical consumer bill. This table presents the impact if recovered over one tariff year, this would be less if spread over a longer period of time. These estimates have been rounded to the nearest £10.

Note 3: For reference, the typical domestic consumer bill from 1 October 2025 has a unit price of 30.62 p/kWh (ex VAT). Power NI tariff review briefing paper - October 2025 | Utility Regulator

6.36 The table shows that approximately half (52%) of the total costs of GSS payments and administration would have been recovered from domestic consumers and half (48%) from business consumers.

Option 3: Current GB Regulations

6.37 This option is informed by the current supply restoration standard in GB which came into force on 1 November 2024.

6.38 This option would introduce a GSS standard for supply restoration in severe weather conditions. This would be introduced in addition to the existing standard for supply restoration in normal weather conditions.

6.39 This standard would introduce two categories of severe weather events. Category 3 (as defined in paragraph 6.24) would not be included within this standard as this category was removed from the GB Regulations when these were amended in 2023 (effective from 1 November 2024)[33]. The categories are as follows:

- Category 1 severe weather conditions:

[33] The Electricity (Standards of Performance) (Amendment) Regulations 2023

(i) conditions in which at least eight times the daily average number of faults in a 24 hour period are caused by weather predominantly related to lightning; or

(ii) conditions in which at least eight times the daily average number of in a 24 hour period are caused by weather not predominantly related to lightning.

- Category 2 severe weather conditions includes:

  (i) conditions in which at least thirteen times the daily average number of faults in a 24 hour period are caused by weather not predominantly related to lightning.

6.40 For category 1 events, the prescribed period after which a payment would be due is 24 hours. For category 2 events supply, the prescribed period is 48 hours.

6.41 If there is a failure by the electricity distributor to meet the standard, in relation to all categories of severe weather events, a payment of £85 would be due to any domestic or non-domestic consumer affected. For each subsequent period of 6 hours after the initial prescribed period has passed, an additional payment of £45 would be payable, subject to a maximum cap (£2,000). This level of payment aligns with the current payment levels for this standard in GB.

6.42 Table 6.4 summarises the total number of consumers who would have been eligible for a GSS payment if this standard had been applicable over the previous five years, the total value of these payments for each storm and the annual increase to the domestic consumer bill (if costs were recovered from consumers).

6.43 The one-off increase is the additional amount that would be applied to a typical domestic consumer bill to recover the costs of the GSS payments for each storm (including admin costs). The additional annual amount on the consumer bill would depend on the period over which these costs were recovered. For illustrative purposes, this table presents the impact if recovered over one tariff year.

Table 6.4: Option 3 - Overall value of payments and domestic consumer bill impact (2020/21 to 2024/25)

Year	Storm	Number of domestic and non-domestic consumers eligible for a payment	Total value of payments made by NIE Networks	Total costs (inc. admin) to NIE Networks	One-off increase on typical domestic bill (all consumers receive and pay)	One-off increase on typical domestic bill (domestic only receive and pay)
2020/21	-	-	-	-	-	-
2021/22	Franklin	0	-	-	-	-
2022/23	-	-	-	-	-	-
2023/24	Isha	600	£101,000	£122,000	£0.07	£0.13
2024/25	Darragh	700	£95,000	£120,000	£0.07	£0.13
	Éowyn	57,400	£21,610,000	£23,610,000	£15.00	£25.00

Note 1: Numbers of consumers have been rounded to the nearest 100.

Note 2: Total value of payments and total costs have been rounded to the nearest 1,000.

Note 3: Estimated increase on the typical domestic consumer bill has been rounded to the nearest £5. Very small estimated increases are unrounded.

Note 4: For the 'one-off increase on typical domestic bill (domestic only pay)' column, the total costs (incl. admin) on which these estimates are based have been adjusted as per paragraph 6.16.

6.44 If NIE Networks were responsible for fully funding GSS payments and the associated administrative costs for storms over the previous five years, the costs would have ranged between £120,000 for Storm Darragh to £23,610,000 for Storm Éowyn.

6.45 If the proposed severe weather cost recovery threshold had been in place, then this threshold would only have been exceeded during Storm Éowyn. For all other storms, costs of GSS payment related costs would have been fully funded by NIE Networks.

6.46 If Option 3 had been in place between 2020 and 2025 and the severe weather cost recovery threshold had been applicable, NIE Networks would have paid £1.1m and £22.7m would have been paid for by consumers over this five year period[34]. The impact on consumer bills would have been:

[34] £122,000 would have been paid by NIE Networks in 2023/24 and £1,000,000 in 2024/25. The remainder would have been paid by consumers. Figures in paragraph 6.46 have been rounded to the nearest £0.1m.

- A one-off additional £15 following Storm Éowyn if costs were recovered from all consumers.
- A one-off additional £25[35] following Storm Éowyn if costs were recovered from domestic consumers only.

6.47 Table 6.5 breaks down the value of payments that domestic consumers would have received if Option 3 had been in place during Storm Éowyn, depending on how long it took for their supply to be restored.

Table 6.5: Option 3 - Storm Éowyn payment schedule

Day	Time period of supply restoration	Number of consumers eligible for payment	Value of payment per consumer
1	Restored within 24 Hours	N/A	£0
2	Restored within 48 Hours	N/A	£0
3	Restored between 48-72 hrs	25,000	£85-£220
4	Restored between 72-96 hrs	14,000	£265-£400
5	Restored between 96-120 hrs	8,000	£445-£580
6	Restored between 120-144 hrs	4,000	£625-£760
7	Restored between 144-168 hrs	2,000	£805-£940
8	Restored between 168-192 hrs	2,000	£985-£1,120
9	Restored between 192-216 hrs	1,000	£1,165-£1,300
19	Restored between 216-240 hrs	400	£1,345-£1,480
11	Restored between 240-266 hrs	40	£,1525-£1,660

Note 1: Numbers of consumers have been rounded to the nearest 1,000.

Note 2: The value of payments made to each consumer are not impacted by the cost recovery threshold. Payment amounts would be the same whether a cost recovery threshold was in place or not.

6.48 The value of payments that would have been received by those eligible ranges between £85 and £1,660. 44% of those eligible for a payment would have received between £85 and £220.

6.49 Table 6.6 presents the estimated tariff impacts across different consumer groups, if GSS payments from Storm Éowyn were recovered from all consumers.

35 Costs have been rounded to the nearest £5.

Table 6.6: Option 3 - Estimated impact on tariffs for Storm Éowyn

Consumer Group	Number of consumers	Typical kWh/a	Total additional T&D	Bill Impact (one-off increase £)	Bill Impact p/kwh
Domestic	850,729	3.4	£12,225,000	£10	0.4
Small Business	72,833	16.4	£4,253,000	£60	0.4
SME, LV	5,363	275	£4,643,000	£870	0.3
SME, HV	226	1,593	£650,000	£2,880	0.2
LEU, HV	204	5,457	£1,340,000	£6,570	0.1
LEU, 33kv	18	31,075	£229,000	£12,750	0.04

Note 1: The increase to the domestic consumer bill is the additional amount (£) that would be added to the Transmission & Distribution (T&D) element of the consumer bill as a one-off increase. These estimates have been rounded to the nearest £1,000.

Note 2: Bill impacts are presented as the additional one-off increase as it would impact the typical consumer bill. This table presents the impact if recovered over one tariff year, this would be less if spread over a longer period of time. These estimates have been rounded to the nearest £10.

Note 3: For reference, the typical domestic consumer bill from 1 October 2025 has a unit price of 30.62 p/kWh (ex VAT). Power NI tariff review briefing paper - October 2025 | Utility Regulator

Option 4: Delayed repair following loss of service payment scheme

6.50 This option is informed by the Ofcom delayed repair following loss of service compensation scheme[36].

6.51 If their provider has signed up to the scheme, landline and broadband consumers are eligible for compensation if their service has stopped working and is not fully fixed two full working days after they have reported the fault to their provider. Consumers receive an initial £9.98 if the service is not fixed two full working days after they have reported it, and then £9.98 for each full day it is still not fixed after that. Payments are increased in line with inflation each year. Providers can put a cap on the amount of compensation they pay out[37].

6.52 This option would introduce a similar standard for electricity consumers. If there is a failure by the electricity distributor to meet the standard a payment of £10 per day would be due to any domestic or non-domestic consumer affected if their electricity supply is not restored within 48 hours. A restoration period of 48 hours has been applied to this standard

[36] Automatic compensation: What you need to know - Ofcom
Industry Code of Practice for Automatic Compensation 2024 V1

[37] After 30 days of an automatic compensation payment occurring, providers can serve a cease notice to let consumers know that automatic compensation payments would stop after a further 30 days. Automatic compensation: What you need to know - Ofcom

(rather than working days) to align with the approach used in options 2 and 3. Payments would be subject to a maximum cap of £300 (capped at 30 days, which is similar to the Ofcom scheme)[38].

6.53 The Ofcom scheme is a voluntary scheme and is therefore not a mandatory requirement per the legislation. Broadband and landline providers who sign up to the scheme provide compensation for delayed repair following a loss of service, missed appointments and delays to the start of a new service. The 'delayed repair following loss of service' compensation applied during Storm Éowyn.

6.54 For the avoidance of doubt, if it is decided to introduce a similar scheme for the electricity distributor in Northern Ireland, this scheme would be mandatory under the GSS Regulations. The payment method would align with all other GSS payments.

6.55 Table 6.7 summarises the total number of consumers who would have been eligible for a GSS payment if Option 4 had been applicable over the previous five years, the total value of these payments for each storm and the annual increase to the consumer bill (if costs were recovered from consumers).

[38] Storm data from 1998 to present shows that the longest it has taken to restore supply is 11 days.

Table 6.7: Option 4 - Overall value of payments and domestic consumer bill impact (2020/21 – 2024/25)

Year	Storm	Number of domestic and non-domestic consumers eligible for a payment	Total value of payments made by NIE Networks	Total costs (inc. admin) to NIE Networks	One-off increase on typical domestic bill (all consumers receive and pay)	One-off increase on typical domestic bill (domestic only receive and pay)
2020/21	-	-	-	-	-	-
2021/22	Franklin	0	-	-	-	-
2022/23	-	-	-	-	-	-
2023/24	Isha	600	£7,000	£28,000	£0.02	£0.03
2024/25	Darragh	700	£7,000	£33,000	£0.02	£0.02
	Éowyn	57,400	£1,288,000	£3,288,000	£2.00	£3.00

Note 1: Numbers of consumers have been rounded to the nearest 100.

Note 2: Total value of payments and total costs have been rounded to the nearest 1,000.

Note 3: Estimated increase on the typical domestic consumer bill has been rounded to the nearest £1. Very small, estimated increases are unrounded.

Note 4: For the 'one-off increase on typical domestic bill (domestic only pay)' column, the total costs (incl. admin) on which these estimates are based have been adjusted as per paragraph 6.16.

6.56 If NIE Networks were responsible for fully funding GSS payments and the associated administrative costs for storms over the previous five years, the costs would have ranged between £28,000 for Storm Isha to £3,288,000 for Storm Éowyn.

6.57 If the proposed severe weather cost recovery threshold had been in place, then this threshold would only have been exceeded during Storm Éowyn. For all other storms, costs of GSS payment related costs would have been fully funded by NIE Networks.

6.58 If Option 4 had been in place during Storm Éowyn and the severe weather cost recovery threshold had been applicable, NIE Networks would have paid £1m and £2.3m would have been paid for by consumers over this five year period[39]. The impact on consumer bills would have been:

[39] £28,000 would have been paid by NIE Networks in 2023/24 and £1,000,000 in 2024/25. The remainder would have been paid by consumers. Figures in paragraph 6.58 have been rounded to the nearest £0.1m.

- A one-off additional £1 following Storm Éowyn if costs were recovered from all consumers.

- A one-off additional £2[40] following Storm Éowyn if costs were recovered from domestic consumers only.

6.59 Table 6.8 breaks down the value of payments that domestic consumers would have received if this option had been in place during Storm Éowyn, depending on how long it took to restore their supply.

Table 6.8: Option 4 - Storm Éowyn payment schedule

Day	Time period of supply restoration	No of consumers eligible for payment	Value of payment per consumer
1	Restored within 24 Hours	N/A	£0
2	Restored within 48 Hours	N/A	£0
3	Restored between 48-72 hrs	25,000	£10
4	Restored between 72-96 hrs	14,000	£20
5	Restored between 96-120 hrs	8,000	£30
6	Restored between 120-144 hrs	4,000	£40
7	Restored between 144-168 hrs	2,000	£50
8	Restored between 168-192 hrs	2,000	£60
9	Restored between 192-216 hrs	1,000	£70
19	Restored between 216-240 hrs	400	£80
11	Restored between 240-266 hrs	40	£90

Note 1: Numbers of consumers have been rounded to the nearest 1,000.

Note 2: The value of payments made to each consumer are not impacted by the cost recovery threshold. Payment amounts would be the same whether a cost recovery threshold was in place or not.

6.60 The value of payments that would have been received by those eligible ranges between £10 and £90. 44% of those eligible for a payment would have received £10.

6.61 Table 6.9 presents the estimated tariff impacts across different consumer groups, if GSS payments from Storm Éowyn were recovered from all consumers.

[40] Costs have been rounded to the nearest £1.

Table 6.9: Option 4 - Estimated impact on tariffs for Storm Éowyn

Consumer Group	Number of consumers	Typical kWh/a	Total additional T&D	Bill Impact (one-off increase £)	Bill Impact p/kwh
Domestic	850,729	3.4	£1,734,000	£2	0.06
Small Business	72,833	16.4	£603,000	£10	0.05
SME, LV	5,363	275	£659,000	£120	0.04
SME, HV	226	1,593	£92,000	£410	0.03
LEU, HV	204	5,457	£190,000	£930	0.02
LEU, 33kv	18	31,075	£33,000	£1,810	0.006

Note 1: The increase to the domestic consumer bill is the additional amount (£) that would be added to the Transmission & Distribution (T&D) element of the consumer bill as a one-off increase. These estimates have been rounded to the nearest £1,000.

Note 2: Bill impacts are presented as the additional one-off increase as it would impact the typical consumer bill. This table presents the impact if recovered over one tariff year, this would be less if spread over a longer period of time. These estimates have been rounded to the nearest £10, amounts less than £5 are rounded to the nearest £1.

Note 3: For reference, the typical domestic consumer bill from 1 October 2025 has a unit price of 30.62 p/kWh (ex VAT). Power NI tariff review briefing paper - October 2025 | Utility Regulator

Exemptions

6.62 The introduction of a standard for supply restoration in severe weather conditions (Options 2 to 4) would also include amending the GSS Regulations to introduce a specific set of exemptions which are applicable to the supply restoration standards only. The separate exemptions for the supply restoration standards would not include an exemption clause for severe weather conditions.

6.63 These exemptions would be introduced in addition to the 'general' exemptions that apply to most of the remaining GSS Regulations. This would align with the exemptions in GB.

6.64 Further detail on the exemptions can be found in Chapter 9.

Summary

6.65 Table 6.10 summarises the estimated cost impacts of the options presented above, if these options had been applicable during Storm Éowyn and a cost recovery threshold was not applied. This includes the maximum value of payment that consumers would have received, the total value of payments that would have been made, the total costs (including administrative costs) and impacts on customer bills (if costs were recovered by consumers).

Table 6.10: Comparison of options if applicable during Storm Éowyn (no threshold applied)

Option	Max payment value received	Total value of payments made by NIE Networks	Total costs (payments + admin) to NIE Networks	One-off increase on typical domestic bill (all consumers receive and pay)	One-off increase on typical domestic bill (domestic only receive and pay)
Option 1 – No change.	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Option 2 - £70 after first 48 hours + £70 every subsequent 12 hours. Cap of £700.	£700	£15.4m	£17.4m	£10	£20
Option 3 - £85 after first 48 hours + £45 every subsequent 6 hours. Cap of £2,000.	£1,660	£21.6m	£23.6m	£15	£25
Option 4 - £10 per day. Cap at 30 days.	£90	£1.3m	£3.3m	£2	£3

Note 1: Estimated total value of payments and total costs have been rounded to the nearest £1,000,000.

Note 2: Estimated increase on the typical domestic consumer bill has been rounded to the nearest £5. Amounts less than £5 are rounded to the nearest £1.

Note 4: For the 'one-off increase on typical domestic bill (domestic only pay)' column, the total costs (incl. admin) on which these estimates are based have been adjusted as per paragraph 6.16.

Consultation Questions

Q8: Of the options presented, can respondents please share their preference in relation to introducing a standard for supply restoration in severe weather conditions. Please provide evidence to support your response.

Q9: Do respondents think that the proposed level of payments and caps to the payment levels are appropriate? Please provide evidence to support your response.

Q10: Should a standard for supply restoration in severe weather conditions be implemented, can respondents please share views on how the payment should be funded. Please provide evidence to support your response.

7. Payment levels and inflationary uplifts

Payment levels

Background

7.1 The GSS provides a regulatory framework under which payments can be made in acknowledgment of the inconvenience caused to the consumer when either the electricity distributor or electricity supplier fails to deliver against a standard of performance for which it is reasonably expected to meet.

7.2 The payment values do not reflect or attempt to remedy the actual loss, either partial or whole, incurred by the individual consumer in the unique circumstances of every case. Furthermore, GSS payments are not intended to take the place of household or business insurance. UR intends to continue with this approach.

7.3 The costs of making GSS payments for failure to meet any standard, other than potentially the proposed options for supply restoration in severe weather conditions, will not be recoverable from consumers. The purpose of GSS payments is to acknowledge the inconvenience caused to the consumer when the electricity company fails to deliver against a standard of performance for which it is reasonably expected to meet. UR is of the view that it would not be appropriate, nor incentivise company performance if customers ultimately had to fund a scheme for service underperformance.

7.4 For clarity, the payment amounts referred to in this chapter are applicable to the GSS Regulations only. No individual consumer payments are due if the electricity distributor or electricity supplier fails to meet the requirements of the OSP.

7.5 In the 2023 consultation, UR proposed an uplift to the existing payment levels with the intention of bringing payments closer in line with those offered by the GB GSS Regulations. Since then, the payment levels in GB have increased for both electricity distributors and electricity suppliers.

Consultation Proposal

7.6 UR proposes to introduce payment levels in Northern Ireland which are informed by those currently offered in GB. This is in acknowledgment of the fact that the GB payment levels have progressed further in the passage of time since the 2023 consultation paper was published.

7.7 For reference, the GB payment amounts which UR has used for this alignment are those applicable for the Regulatory Year 2025/26 for electricity distribution[41] and those applicable as of 2 January 2025 for electricity suppliers[42]. This will ensure that the payment amounts available to consumers in Northern Ireland are aligned with those currently available to consumers in GB.

7.8 The payment which is to be made for each particular standard is outlined under the corresponding GSS Regulation as set out in Chapter 8 and in Annex 1 of this paper.

7.9 As explained below, it is proposed that these payment amounts are subject to annual inflationary uplifts.

Inflationary uplifts

Background

7.10 The current payment amounts set for each GSS Regulation in Northern Ireland have remained unchanged since 1999, and under the existing regime, changes to these payment levels are only undertaken during a full review of the Regulations.

7.11 In GB, the payment amounts for electricity distribution GSS[43] are annually updated for inflation. However, GB Regulations for supplier GSS[44] do not contain a mechanism whereby payment amounts are regularly adjusted by inflation. Instead, supplier payment amounts are updated periodically by Ofgem, via a statutory instrument following consultation with interested parties.

7.12 The GB, GSS Regulations for electricity distribution sets out the mechanism by which the payment amounts made by electricity distributors, for each individual GSS Regulation, are adjusted by inflation for each Regulatory Year[45]. This is calculated by adjusting the value of the payment amount as it was on 1 October 2023 ('the base year') by the percentage change in the CPIH[46] index published for the month of January preceding the Regulatory Year for which the adjustment is being made and that published for January 2023. The figure is then rounded to the nearest multiple of £5.

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[41] Electricity distribution - Adjustments to the Guaranteed Standards of Performance: 2025 | Ofgem

[42] Electricity suppliers - Supplier Guaranteed Standards of Performance (GSOP) Payment Uplift | Ofgem

[43] Regulation 21A of The Electricity (Standards of Performance) Regulations 2015

[44] Electricity and Gas (Standards of Performance) (Suppliers) Regulations 2015

[45] The Regulatory Year runs from 1st April - 31st March

[46] CPIH - The Consumer Prices Index which includes owner occupiers' housing costs.

7.13 In the most recent update to the GSS payment amounts for electricity suppliers, as published in November 2024[47], Ofgem chose to mirror the approach used for electricity distribution by adjusting the payment amounts by the same measure of inflation (CPIH).

Consultation Proposal

7.14 UR propose to introduce an inflationary adjustment mechanism which has been informed by the mechanism currently in place in the GB GSS Regulations for electricity distributors.

7.15 The proposed mechanism will adjust the payment amounts to be made for each Regulatory Year and will apply to payments made by both the electricity distributor and electricity suppliers. The new payment amount will be calculated by adjusting the value of the 'base year' payment amount by the 'inflationary adjustment factor'. The payment amount will then be rounded, either up or down, to the nearest multiple of £5. This is illustrated in Table 7.1 below.

7.16 The 'base year', (i.e. the payment amount to be used as the base for all annual adjustments) will be set, where possible, as the value of the payment amount as it was in the GB GSS for electricity distribution as of 1 October 2023[48]. For those standards that cannot be directly compared with this source, a base year payment amount has been set by UR that will allow future inflation adjustments to remain aligned with the payment amounts offered in GB. The base year payment amounts set by UR can be found in Annex 3 - Inflation Adjustment Mechanism.

7.17 The 'inflationary adjustment factor' will be set as the percentage change in the CPIH index[49] as published for the month of January preceding the Regulatory Year for which the payment is being made and that published for January 2023.

7.18 Table 7.1 illustrates how the payment amounts for Regulatory Year 2025/26 (1 April 2025 - 31 March 2026) would be calculated using this methodology.

[47] Supplier Guaranteed Standards of Performance (GSOP) Payment Uplift | Ofgem

[48] The Electricity (Standards of Performance) (Amendment) Regulations 2023

[49] CPIH is defined as the "consumer prices index including owner occupiers' housing costs (all items) published by the Office for National Statistics" - Office for National Statistics

Table 7.1: Example adjustment to payment amounts for Regulatory Year 2025/26

Payment amount as of 'base year'	'Inflationary adjustment factor' (% change between CPIH Jan 2023 - Jan 2025)	Calculated change to payment amount	Payment amount as of 1st April 2025	Inflationary Increase applicable?
£30	1.08	+£32.49	£30	No
£35		+£37.89	£40	Yes
£70		+£75.78	£75	Yes
£175		+£189.46	£190	Yes

7.19 For clarity, when calculating the adjustment for Regulatory Year 2026/27, the payment amount will be calculated by adjusting the 'base year' payment amount by the percentage change in the CPIH index as published for January 2026 and that published for January 2023.

7.20 To allow time for DfE to lay the proposed Regulations before the Northern Ireland Assembly, and, if accepted, for the new Regulations to come into effect, we propose that the first inflationary adjustment be made for the first regulatory year following the implementation of the new GSS (which we anticipate will be the Regulatory Year 2027/28)[50].

7.21 Notification of the annual inflationary adjustment and a table of the new payment amounts to be paid for each GSS Regulation for the upcoming Regulatory Year will be published by UR in March to be applied from 1 April onwards.

7.22 A proposed template to be used to calculate the annual inflation adjustment has been included in Annex 8 - Inflation Adjustment Mechanism.

Consultation Questions

Q11: Do respondents agree with UR's proposal to increase the current GSS payment levels to align with those currently offered in GB? Please provide evidence to support your response.

Q12: Do respondents agree with UR's proposal for annual inflationary uplifts to payment levels? Please provide evidence to support your response.

[50] Assuming that the amended GSS Regulations are introduced into legislation during Winter 2026/27.

Q13: Do respondents agree with UR's proposed methodology for annual inflationary uplifts to payment levels? Please provide evidence to support your response.

8. Summary of proposed Guaranteed Standards of Service

Background

8.1 Outside of the specific areas presented in this paper for consultation, as detailed in Chapter 5 – Metering, Chapter 6 – Supply restoration in severe weather and Chapter 7 – Payment levels and inflationary uplifts, UR still intends to proceed with its review of the remaining GSS Regulations as consulted on in the 2023 consultation paper.

8.2 The proposed amendments to all other standards, outside of those referenced in chapters 5 to 7, remain unchanged from those proposed in the 2023 consultation. Where considered appropriate, further clarification has been provided to the Complaints standard and the Timing of Notification standard and is intended to provide clarity on how the standard will operate as opposed to proposing a substantial change.

8.3 All responses received to the 2023 consultation paper will be considered as part of UR's Final Decision Paper. Whilst UR does not seek to specifically re-consult on these areas at this time, stakeholders are free to make further comment should they wish to do so.

8.4 This chapter summarises the proposed amendments to the GSS Regulations. Where the GSS Regulation has been impacted by the areas outlined in this paper, this has been highlighted.

Proposed Guaranteed Standards of Service

8.5 This chapter provides a full list of the proposed GSS Regulations that will apply to the electricity distributor and electricity suppliers. Where there are specific responsibilities for a particular party, this has been highlighted.

8.6 The proposed payment amounts for each GSS Regulation have been set as per the rationale given in Chapter 7 and would be subject to inflationary adjustments, if implemented as part of this consultation.

Distributor's fuse

8.7 This standard applies to the electricity distributor only.

Existing Guaranteed Standard of Service

8.8 The regulation applies where the electricity distributor[51] is informed (other than by post) by a customer during working hours[52], that, or of circumstances suggesting that, the distributor's fuse has operated so as to disconnect the supply to the customer's premises.

8.9 Where this occurs the electricity distributor must replace the faulty fuse within 3 hours on a working day or 4 hours on any other day. If not, a payment of £25 is due to any domestic or non-domestic consumer affected.

8.10 Where information is received by the distributor outside working hours it shall be deemed to have been received at the commencement of the next following working day.

Proposed Guaranteed Standard of Service

8.11 We propose to retain this standard in its existing form and to increase the payment amount to £40.

Supply restoration (in normal conditions)

8.12 This standard applies to the electricity distributor only.

Existing Guaranteed Standard of Service

8.13 The current standard requires the electricity distributor to restore supply to a customer's premises within 24 hours, where the interruption to supply has been as a result of a failure of, fault in or damage to the supplier's distribution system[53].

8.14 If supply is not restored within this timeframe, a payment of £50 is due to any domestic consumer and £125 for any non-domestic consumer

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[51] In the GSS Regulations the term 'supplier' is used throughout. For the purposes of this consultation, we have amended the term to either 'electricity distributor' or 'electricity supplier' where applicable.

[52] The current definition of working hours can be found in Schedule II of the Electricity (Standards of Performance) (Amendment No. 3) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1999. These are defined as between "7.00 am and 7.00 pm on each working day and 9.00 am and 5.00 pm on any other day." A proposed amendment to this definition is included under the Timing of Notification standard in Chapter 10.

[53] With the exception of where the Distributer's Fuse Regulation applies.

affected. For each subsequent 12 hour period during which supply is not restored, a further payment of £25 is due to any consumer affected.

8.15 The current standard is subject to exemptions under Regulation 14, which includes the severe weather conditions exemption clause.

<u>Proposed Guaranteed Standard of Service</u>

8.16 We propose that this regulation would apply where a customer experiences an interruption to supply that has been caused as a result of a failure of, fault in or damage to the supplier's distribution system, in normal weather conditions.

8.17 If less than 5,000 customers are affected, the electricity distributor must restore supply within 18 hours. If this standard is not met, a payment of £95 is due to any domestic consumer and £190 for any non-domestic consumer affected. A further payment of £45 will be due for every subsequent 12 hour period in which supply is not restored.

8.18 If more than 5,000 customers are affected, the electricity distributor must restore supply within 24 hours. If this standard is not met, a payment of £95 is due to any domestic consumer and £190 for any non-domestic consumer affected. A further payment of £45 will be due for every subsequent 12 hour period in which supply is not restored, up to a maximum cap of £390.

8.19 The standard will be subject to exemptions (as set out for consultation in Chapter 9) and would not be applicable during severe weather conditions.

Supply restoration (in severe weather conditions)

8.20 This proposed standard applies to the electricity distributor only.

8.21 Full details of the proposed standard are outlined in Chapter 6 - Supply restoration in severe weather conditions.

Provision of supply

8.22 This standard applies to the electricity supplier only.

8.23 Full details of the proposed amendments to this standard are outlined in Chapter 5 -Metering.

Estimate of charges

8.24 This standard applies to the electricity supplier only.

8.25 Full details of the proposed amendments to this standard are outlined in Chapter 5 -Metering.

Notice of supply interruption

8.26 This standard applies to the electricity distributor only.

Existing Guaranteed Standard of Service

8.27 This regulation applies where the electricity distributor discontinues the supply to a customer's premises for an authorised purpose.

8.28 The electricity distributor must provide a minimum of 3 days prior notice of a planned interruption to a customer's supply. The regulation also applies if the electricity distributor disconnects the supply on a day other than the day stated in the notice. If this standard is not met, a payment of £25 is due to any domestic consumer and £50 for any non-domestic consumer affected.

Proposed Guaranteed Standard of Service

8.29 We propose to retain this standard in its existing form and to expand the drafting to clarify that the timeframe of '3 days prior notice' refers to 3 working days.

8.30 We also propose to increase the payment amounts to £40 for domestic consumers, and to £75 for non-domestic consumers.

Voltage complaint

8.31 This regulation is applicable to the electricity distributor only.

Existing Guaranteed Standard of Service

8.32 This regulation applies where the electricity distributor is informed that a customer's supply is or has been given at a voltage outside the limits of the permitted variations, or an event has occurred that could have reasonably been caused by a voltage outside the permitted limits.

8.33 The electricity distributor must:

- Where a visit to the consumer's premises is required to investigate the issue, offer an appointment for this purpose within 7 working days of being notified; and
- Attend the appointment made for this purpose during the specified time.
- Where a visit is not required, provide an explanation of the probable cause for the issue within 5 working days of being notified.

8.34 If any of the standards above are not met, a payment of £25 is due to any domestic or non-domestic consumer affected.

Proposed Guaranteed Standard of Service

8.35 We propose to retain this standard in its existing form and to increase the payment amount to £40.

Meter disputes

8.36 This regulation is applicable to the electricity supplier. The proposed amendment is to also introduce requirements for the electricity distributor for this standard.

8.37 Full details of the proposed amendments to this standard are outlined in Chapter 5 -Metering.

Prepayment meters

8.38 This regulation is applicable to the electricity supplier. The proposed amendment is to also introduce requirements for the electricity distributor for this standard.

8.39 Full details of the proposed amendments to this standard are outlined in Chapter 5 - Metering.

Meter errors

8.40 This proposed regulation will be applicable to the electricity supplier and the electricity distributor.

8.41 Full details of the proposed amendments to this standard are outlined in Chapter 5 - Metering.

Charges and payments

8.42 This regulation is applicable to the electricity distributor and electricity suppliers.

Existing Guaranteed Standard of Service

8.43 This regulation applies when:

- A customer informs the electricity distributor or electricity supplier that they wish to change the method by which they make a payment. If it is unable to approve the customer's request, the electricity distributor or electricity supplier must provide a substantive response within 5 working days.

- A customer queries the correctness of their account. The electricity distributor or electricity supplier must provide a substantive response within 5 working days.

    (i) If any payment is owed as a result of the customer's query, the electricity distributor or electricity supplier must pay the amount owed within 5 working days of issuing its substantive response.

- A customer queries if they are due a payment under the GSS Regulations. The electricity distributor or electricity supplier must provide a substantive response within 5 working days.

8.44 If any of the above standards are not met, a payment of £25 is due to any domestic or non-domestic consumer affected.

Proposed Guaranteed Standard of Service

8.45 We propose to retain this regulation in its current form and to increase the payment amount to £40 for domestic consumers and non-domestic consumers.

Appointments

8.46 This regulation is applicable to the electricity distributor and electricity suppliers.

Existing Guaranteed Standard of Service

8.47 This regulation applies where the customer informs the electricity distributor or electricity supplier that the customer wishes the relevant company to visit the customer's premises, or the electricity distributor or electricity supplier informs the customer that the relevant company wishes to visit the customer's premises.

8.48 The electricity distributor or electricity supplier must offer a timed appointment for visits to customer premises within a reasonable period and between 8.30am and 1pm, or 12 noon and 5pm. The relevant company must also keep this appointment (subject to exemptions). If either of the standards are not met, a payment of £25 is due to any domestic or non-domestic consumer affected.

Proposed Guaranteed Standard of Service

8.49 We propose to retain this regulation in its current form and to increase the payment amount to £40 for domestic consumers and non-domestic consumers.

Complaints

8.50 We propose to introduce this as a new regulation which is informed by the current Gas GSS in Northern Ireland.

8.51 This regulation is applicable to the electricity distributor and electricity suppliers.

<u>Proposed Guaranteed Standard of Service</u>

8.52 We propose that this regulation would apply when a customer submits a verbal or written complaint to either the electricity distributor or electricity supplier.

8.53 The relevant company should provide:

- A substantive response within 10 working days.
- Where the relevant company is unable to provide a substantive response to the complaint without visiting the customer's premises, it should provide an initial response explaining this within 10 working days. The company should then provide a substantive response within 20 working days.

If this standard is not met, a payment of £40 is due to any domestic or non-domestic consumer affected.

Multiple disconnections

8.54 We propose to introduce this as a new regulation.

8.55 This regulation is applicable to the electricity distributor only.

<u>Proposed Guaranteed Standard of Service</u>

8.56 This regulation applies if a customer experiences 4 or more power cuts in one year (running from 1 April to 31 March), each lasting longer than 3 hours.

8.57 A payment of £95 is due to any domestic or non-domestic consumer affected, provided that a consumer submits a claim before the end of the year.

Rota disconnections

8.58 We propose to introduce this as a new regulation.

8.59 This regulation is applicable to electricity distributor only.

Proposed Guaranteed Standard of Service

8.60 This regulation applies when supply to a customer's premises needs to be interrupted due to a shortage of electricity. It would enable the available electricity to be distributed fairly until the cause of the shortage could be rectified.

8.61 If a customer is disconnected for over 24 hours on this basis, a payment of £95 for any domestic consumer and £190 for any non-domestic consumer affected is due.

Notice of rights

8.62 This regulation is applicable to the electricity distributor and electricity suppliers and gives direction on how the company should make information available on the GSS Regulations and OSP Determinations. There is no payment associated with this regulation.

Existing Guaranteed Standard of Service

8.63 The current standard requires the company to prepare, and from time to time revise, a statement describing customer rights in relation to GSS and OSP, in a form and having a content that could be reasonably understood by customers. The company is further required to:

(i) Give a copy of the statement, and of any revision of the statement to the Utility Regulator and the Consumer Council before making it available to customers;

(ii) At least once in any period of 12 months dispatch to each tariff customer a copy of the statement (in the form current at the time it is provided), provided that where in relation to any premises more than one person is a tariff customer, the obligation shall be satisfied by dispatching a copy to any one of them;

(iii) Make a copy of the statement (in its current form) available for inspection by any person at any premises of or occupied by the company open to customers in the normal course of the business during the normal opening hours of the premises; and

(iv) Dispatch a copy of the statement (in its current form) to any person who requests it.

8.64 The Regulation provides that the company may prepare a separate statement for domestic and non-domestic customers and satisfy its obligation under sub-paragraph (ii) or (iv) above, by dispatching the statement appropriate to the class of customer to whom it is dispatched.

Proposed Guaranteed Standard of Service

8.65 It is proposed to retain the standard for the electricity distributor and electricity supplier with an amendment to reflect the distributor-supplier relationship.

8.66 Due to the fact that it is the electricity supplier, rather than the electricity distributor, who has the direct relationship with the customer, UR deems it more appropriate that the supplier, in addition to its own statement, would also provide a copy of the statement prepared by NIE Networks to customers.

8.67 This standard would require the electricity distributor to prepare, and from time to time revise, a statement describing consumers rights and benefits regarding the GSS and OSP provisions, which are applicable to the electricity distributor, for circulation by the electricity supplier. UR proposes that the distributor should:

- Give a copy of the statement, and of any revision to the Authority and to the Consumer Council before it is given to electricity suppliers;
- At least once in any period of 12 months send out to each supplier which supplies electricity to customers connected to the electricity distributor's system, a copy of the statement for the electricity supplier to make available by appropriate means to the supplier's customers;
- Make a copy of the statement available for inspection by any person at any premises occupied by the electricity distributor which is open to the public during normal business hours; and
- Make available by appropriate means a copy of the statement to any person who requests it.

8.68 The electricity supplier, in addition to circulating NIE Networks' statement to consumers, would be required to prepare, revise and circulate its own statement with regards to the GSS Regulations and OSP Determinations applicable to them.

8.69 Suppliers should also:

- Give a copy of the statement, and any revisions of the statement, to the Utility Regulator and to the Consumer Council before the statement is made available to the consumer;
- Make a copy available to each consumer by appropriate means;

- Make a copy available for inspection by any person at any premises which is occupied by the electricity supplier which is open to the public during normal business hours;
- Make a copy available by appropriate means to any person who requests it; and
- At least once in any period of 12 months, make available by appropriate means to each consumer of the electricity supplier the information in any statement which has been sent to the electricity supplier by the electricity distributor.

Disputes

8.70 This regulation is applicable to the electricity distributor and electricity suppliers. There is no payment associated with this regulation.

Existing Guaranteed Standard of Service

8.71 This regulation applies if a dispute is referred to the Utility Regulator for determination under Article 42(5) of the Electricity (Northern Ireland) Order 1992.

8.72 The regulation states that a company must furnish (either to the Utility Regulator or, if required, to the consumer committee) evidence to enable the dispute to be determined.

8.73 If a payment is to be made by the company, due to an order made under Article 42(5) and the company fails to make the payment, the consumer may off-set the payment against any charges owed to the company in relation to supply.

Proposed Guaranteed Standard of Service

8.74 No amendment was proposed to this regulation; we propose that it continues to apply in its current form.

Payments

8.75 This regulation is applicable to the electricity distributor and electricity suppliers.

Existing Guaranteed Standard of Service

8.76 This regulation applies where the electricity distributor or electricity supplier is obliged to make a payment to a customer under any regulation for which a payment is available.

8.77 The electricity distributor or electricity supplier must both notify the customer that a payment is due, and make the payment within 10 working days (subject to exceptions).

8.78 If not, a payment of £25 is due to any domestic or non-domestic consumer affected.

Proposed Guaranteed Standard of Service

8.79 We propose to retain this Regulation in its existing form and to increase the payment amount to £40 for domestic consumers and non-domestic consumers.

Timing of notification

8.80 This regulation is applicable to the electricity distributor and electricity suppliers. There is no payment associated with this regulation.

Existing Guaranteed Standard of Service

8.81 This regulation applies to the following Regulations:

- Providing a supply;
- Estimate of charges;
- Voltage complaints;
- Meter disputes;
- Metering errors;
- Complaints; and
- Charges and payments.

8.82 Where the electricity distributor or electricity supplier receives notification in regard to any of these Regulations by the customer after 4pm on a working day or at any time on any other day, they shall be deemed to have been satisfied on the next following working day.

Proposed Guaranteed Standard of Service

8.83 We propose to retain the standard in its existing form.

8.84 The term ‘working day’ is not currently defined in the existing GSS Regulations. We propose that a definition is added which aligns with the definition used in Part 1, paragraph 2 of the Gas (Individual Standards of

Performance) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2014[54]. This is referred to as any day other than a Saturday, a Sunday and specified public holidays.

8.85 The term 'working hours' is currently defined under Schedule II of the existing electricity GSS Regulations as between '7.00 am and 7.00 pm on each working day and 9.00 am and 5.00 pm on any other day'. However, UR acknowledges the operational differences between the electricity distributor and electricity suppliers, including the different opening hours offered. As a result, we propose that a definition of 'supplier working hours' is also added to the GSS Regulations.

8.86 We propose that this is defined as 'between 8.30am-5pm on each working day and 9am - 5pm on any other day'. This definition aligns with Schedule 1, Part II of the existing Northern Ireland Gas GSS Regulations[55].

8.87 For the electricity distributor, we propose that the definition of working hours remains as the current definition of between '7.00 am and 7.00 pm on each working day and 9.00 am and 5.00 pm on any other day'.

[54] The Gas (Individual Standards of Performance) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2014

[55] The Gas (Individual Standards of Performance) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2014

9. Exemptions

Background

Northern Ireland Exemptions

9.1 The Northern Ireland GSS Regulations are currently subject to a single set of exemptions which are set out under Regulation 14[56]. These exemptions list the circumstances under which the electricity distributor or electricity supplier are exempt from being required to deliver a GSS standard and from having to make a payment to any consumer impacted by the standard not being met.

9.2 Regulation 14 is applicable to the following standards;

- Regulation 3 – Supplier's fuse
- Regulation 4 – Supply restoration
- Regulation 5 – Providing a supply
- Regulation 6 – Estimate of charges
- Regulation 7 – Notice of supply interruption
- Regulation 8 – Voltage complaints
- Regulation 8a – Meter disputes
- Regulation 8b – Prepayment meters
- Regulation 9 – Charges and payments
- Regulation 10 – Appointments
- Regulation 13 – Payments

9.3 For the avoidance of doubt, the current Northern Ireland GSS exemptions contain a clause whereby the electricity distributor or electricity supplier are exempt from meeting the GSS standards in severe weather conditions. As outlined in the list above, this includes supply restoration.

GB Exemptions

9.4 At present, the exemptions which apply to the GB GSS Regulations for electricity distribution are set out under two separate standards.

[56] The Electricity (Standards of Performance) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 1993

- Regulation 9 sets out the circumstances under which the GB electricity distributors are exempt from adhering to the normal and severe weather supply restoration standards only[57]. Regulation 9 does not include an exemption clause for periods of severe weather.

- Regulation 20 sets out the exemptions for the remaining applicable standards in GB[58]. Regulation 20 does include a clause for severe weather.

9.5 The exemptions which apply to the GB GSS Regulations for electricity suppliers are set out under Regulation 9 (of the supplier Regulations).

9.6 In the 2023 consultation paper, UR proposed to include exemptions similar to those in the current GB Regulations.

Consultation proposal

Exemptions for supply restoration standards

9.7 As outlined in Chapter 6 if, following consultation, it is decided to introduce a standard for supply restoration in severe weather conditions for the electricity distributor, UR proposes to implement exemptions which are informed by those that are currently in place under Regulation 9 of the GB GSS Regulations for electricity distributors. This would involve introducing a separate set of exemptions applicable to the supply restoration standards only.

9.8 These exemptions, which would be applicable to supply restoration standards only, would not include a severe weather exemption clause. This is because the severe weather exemption is designed to be applicable where it was not reasonably practicable for the electricity distributor or electricity supplier to take the action required by the regulation as a result of severe weather conditions. In addition, the electricity distributor or electricity supplier should have taken all reasonable steps to prevent the circumstances from occurring and to prevent them from having that effect.

Exemptions for other GSS Regulations

9.9 In addition to the specific exemptions proposed for supply restoration standards, for all other applicable GSS Regulations, we propose to implement an updated set of exemptions for the electricity distributor

[57] Regulation 9 is applicable to Regulations 5 - 8 of the GB GSS Regulations for electricity distributors.
[58] Regulation 20 is applicable to Regulations 11 - 19 (excl. 18) of the GB GSS Regulations for electricity distributors.

and electricity suppliers that are informed by Regulation 20 of the GB GSS Regulations for electricity distributors and Regulation 9 of the GB GSS Regulations for electricity suppliers.

Consultation Questions

Q14: Do respondents agree with UR's proposed approach to update the exemptions to be informed by those in place in GB? Please provide evidence to support your response.

10. Summary of Proposed Overall Standards of Performance

Background

10.1 In addition to the review of the GSS, UR is also reviewing the electricity OSP, which set out general required standards for the electricity distributor and electricity suppliers to meet, that are not individual consumer specific and do not carry a payment if breached.

10.2 The OSP are specified in a Determination made by UR under Article 43 and 43A of the Electricity Order[59] (as it existed at the time they were made) and licensees have a licence obligation to conduct their business in a manner which they reasonably consider to be best calculated to achieve any OSP.

10.3 Outside of the areas for consultation presented in this paper, the 2023 OSP proposals remain unchanged and therefore UR does not specifically seek to re-consult on these areas. All responses received to the 2023 consultation paper will be considered as part of UR's Final Decision Paper; however, stakeholders are free to make further comment should they wish to do so.

10.4 This chapter summarises the proposed OSP Determinations for both the electricity distributor and all electricity suppliers. Where the OSP has been impacted by the areas outlined in this paper, this has been highlighted.

Proposed Overall Standards of Performance

10.5 This chapter provides a full list of the proposed OSP Determinations that will apply to the electricity distributor and all electricity suppliers. Where there are specific responsibilities for a particular party, this has been highlighted.

Restoring supply after power failure

10.6 This standard is applicable to the electricity distributor only.

Existing Overall Standard of Performance

10.7 This standard requires that 87% of customer's affected by a power cut, due to a fault on the distribution system, are reconnected within 3 hours and all consumers are reconnected within 24 hours.

[59] Article 43 and 43A - The Electricity (Northern Ireland) Order 1992

Proposed Overall Standard of Performance

10.8 We propose to retain this standard in its existing form.

Correcting voltage issues

10.9 This standard is applicable to the electricity distributor only.

Existing Overall Standard of Performance

10.10 This standard requires that known voltage issues outside the stated limits are corrected within 6 months, subject to any agreement needed from landowners.

10.11 This standard should be met in 100% of cases

Proposed Overall Standard of Performance

10.12 We propose to retain the standard in its existing form.

Providing a new electricity supply

10.13 As outlined in Chapter 5, this standard is applicable to electricity suppliers only.

Existing Overall Standard of Performance

10.14 This standard currently requires that all new low voltage connections are completed within 30 working days for domestic customers or within 40 working days for non-domestic customers once the terms of the connection have been accepted.

10.15 This standard should be met in 100% of cases.

Proposed Overall Standard of Performance

10.16 The electricity supplier must complete all new low voltage connections for domestic customers within 30 working days or within 40 working days for non-domestic customers once the terms of the connection have been accepted.

10.17 This standard should be met in 100% of cases.

Restoring a supply after disconnection

10.18 This standard is applicable to the electricity distributor only.

Existing Overall Standard of Performance

10.19 This standard requires that a customer's electricity is restored within 24 hours of a working day, following the customer making an agreement with their electricity supplier.

10.20 This standard should be met in 100% of cases.

Proposed Overall Standard of Performance

10.21 We propose to retain the standard in its existing form.

Moving of meters

10.22 As outlined in Chapter 5, this standard is applicable to electricity suppliers only.

Existing Overall Standard of Performance

10.23 This standard currently requires the repositioning of a customer's meter on their meter board within 15 working days of the quotation being accepted.

10.24 This standard should be met in 100% of cases.

Proposed Overall Standard of Performance

10.25 The electricity supplier is responsible for repositioning a customer's meter on their meter board within 15 working days of a quotation being accepted.

10.26 This standard should be met in 100% of cases.

Change of meter

10.27 As outlined in Chapter 5, this standard is applicable to electricity suppliers only.

Existing Overall Standard of Performance

10.28 This standard currently requires that a customer's meter is changed within 10 days of notification that the customer's new tariff requires a new meter to be installed at their home.

10.29 This standard should be met in 100% of cases.

Proposed Overall Standard of Performance

10.30 This standard will apply if a customer's new tariff requires a new meter installed at their home. The electricity supplier will be responsible for changing the meter within 10 working days.

10.31 This standard should be met in 100% of cases.

Meter reading

10.32 As outlined in Chapter 5, this standard is applicable to electricity suppliers only.

Existing Overall Standard of Performance

10.33 This standard currently requires that a meter reading is obtained for 99.5% of customers once a year.

Proposed Overall Standard of Performance

10.34 This standard will require the electricity supplier to get a meter reading for 99.5% of customers once a year.

Replying to written correspondence

10.35 This standard is applicable to the electricity distributor and electricity suppliers.

Existing Overall Standard of Performance

10.36 This standard requires that a reply to a customer's written correspondence is provided within 10 working days, from and including the date the relevant correspondence is received, in 97% of cases.

Proposed Overall Standard of Performance

10.37 We propose to retain the standard in its existing form, to be applicable to the electricity distributor and electricity suppliers.

Responding to complaints

10.38 This is a new standard being proposed, to be applicable to electricity distributor and electricity suppliers.

Proposed Overall Standard of Performance

10.39 This standard will require the electricity distributor or the electricity supplier to provide a full response to a customer's complaint within 10 working days, from and including the date the electricity distributor or electricity supplier receives the relevant complaint, in 97% of cases.

11. Consultation Questions

Chapter 3 – Impact Assessments

Q1: Do respondents think that the proposed GSS and OSP will have no negative impact on the groups listed? Please provide evidence.

Q2: With regards to the Regulatory Impact Assessment, what do respondents consider the key costs and benefits (both monetary and non-monetary) from the implementation of the proposed GSS and OSP are likely to be? Please provide evidence.

Q3: Do respondents wish to add any views in relation to the impact of the proposed GSS and OSP on those living in rural areas? Please provide evidence.

Chapter 5 – Metering

Q4: Do respondents agree with the amended proposed metering GSS for electricity suppliers presented in this chapter? Please provide evidence to support your response.

Q5: Do respondents agree with the amended proposed metering OSP for electricity suppliers presented in this chapter? Please provide evidence to support your response.

Q6: Do respondents agree with the amended proposed metering GSS for electricity distribution presented in this chapter? Please provide evidence to support your response.

Q7: Do respondents agree with the amended proposed metering OSP for electricity distribution presented in this chapter? Please provide evidence to support your response.

Chapter 6 – Supply restoration in severe weather conditions

Q8: Of the options presented, can respondents please share their preference in relation to introducing a standard for supply restoration in severe weather conditions. Please provide evidence to support your response.

Q9: Do respondents think that the proposed level of payments and caps to the payment levels are appropriate? Please provide evidence to support your response.

Q10: Should a standard for supply restoration in severe weather conditions be implemented, can respondents please share views on how the payment should be funded. Please provide evidence to support your response.

Chapter 7 – Payment levels and inflationary uplifts

Q11: Do respondents agree with UR's proposal to increase the current GSS payment levels to align with those currently offered in GB? Please provide evidence to support your response.

Q12: Do respondents agree with UR's proposal for annual inflationary uplifts to payment levels? Please provide evidence to support your response.

Q13: Do respondents agree with UR's proposed methodology for annual inflationary uplifts to payment levels? Please provide evidence to support your response.

Chapter 9 – Exemptions

Q14: Do respondents agree with UR's proposed approach to update the exemptions to be informed by those in place in GB? Please provide evidence to support your response.

12. Implementation

Supplier GSS Responsibilities

12.1 With regard to the existing GSS, these remain applicable at present and suppliers are expected to continue to comply with these, including making the relevant GSS payments to customers, if a standard has not been met. Existing GSS that suppliers are currently required to comply with are set out in paragraph 4.14.

Implementation Timeline

12.2 Once the consultation process has been completed, UR will review the responses received to this consultation paper alongside those received for the 2023 consultation and complete and publish its 'Final Decisions on the Review of Electricity Guaranteed Standards of Service and Overall Standards of Performance'.

12.3 UR will present the new set of GSS Regulations to DfE for its consent. If it consents to the new Regulations, DfE will have the responsibility of laying the Regulations before the Northern Ireland Assembly. Regulations made under Article 42 of the Electricity Order are subject to negative resolution, as per Article 93(2) of the Electricity Order[60].

12.4 UR will specify the OSP for both electricity suppliers and the electricity distributor in Determinations made under Article 43 and 43A of The Electricity (Northern Ireland) Order 1992[61] .

12.5 If following consultation any licence modifications are required, these will be consulted upon in parallel to the implementation of the Regulations. DfE have provided an indicative timeline of Winter 2026/27 for any updates to the Regulations to enter legislation.

12.6 Table 12.1 below shows a timeline for implementation.

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[60] The Electricity (Northern Ireland) Order 1992

[61] Article 43 and 43A - The Electricity (Northern Ireland) Order 1992

Table 12.1: Implementation Timeline

Key milestone	Date
Consultation closes	23 December 2025
Final Decision Paper published	April 2026
Legislative process begins	April 2026
Updated Regulations enter legislation[62]	Winter 2026/27

[62] This timeline is indicative and subject to change, contingent upon the progression of the relevant legislative process.

13. Next Steps

13.1 All response documentation to this consultation must be received by 4pm on Tuesday 23 December 2025.

13.2 Responses to this consultation should be forwarded to:

Consumer Protection - Domestic & Vulnerable Consumers Team
The Utility Regulator
Millenium House
Great Victoria Street
Belfast
BT2 7AQ

Email: domesticconsumers@uregni.gov.uk

13.3 It is our preference that responses are submitted by email where possible. If you would prefer to provide your feedback in another format (for example via a meeting) please get in touch and we will try to facilitate this.

13.4 Alternatively, responses can be submitted via Citizen Space and can be accessed via www.consultations.nidirect.gov.uk.

13.5 Your response may be made public by UR. If you do not want all or part of your response or name made public, please state this clearly in the response by marking your response as 'CONFIDENTIAL'.

13.6 If you want other information that you provide to be treated as confidential, please be aware that, under the FOIA, there is a statutory Code of Practice with which public authorities must comply and which deals, amongst other things, with obligations of confidence. In view of this, it would be helpful if you could explain to us why you regard the information you have provided as confidential.

13.7 Information provided in response to this consultation, including personal information, may be subject to publication or disclosure in accordance with the access to information regimes (these are primarily the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA) and the Data Protection Act 2018 (DPA)).

13.8 As stated in the GDPR Privacy Statement for consumers and stakeholders[63], any personal data contained within your response will be deleted once the matter being consulted on has been concluded though the substance of the response may be retained.

[63] GDPR - Privacy Notices | Utility Regulator

13.9 This document is available in accessible formats. If required in alternative formats, please contact: *domesticconsumers@uregni.gov.uk*

13.10 UR will review all evidence provided in response to this consultation.