

Daniel McCrossan MLA
Chairperson
Public Accounts Committee,
Northern Ireland Assembly,
Parliament Buildings,
Ballymiscaw,
Stormont,
Belfast,
BT4 3XX

19 August 2026

Dear Daniel,

Re: Inquiry into the Northern Ireland Energy Strategy

Thank you for the opportunity to contribute to the Committee's inquiry into the Northern Ireland Energy Strategy. NIE Networks welcomes the Committee's interest in the role of critical infrastructure in supporting Northern Ireland's economic, environmental and energy objectives.

Northern Ireland has world-class renewable energy resources. Increasing the use of clean electricity across transport, heating and industry can reduce emissions, improve air quality, strengthen energy security, attract investment and support job creation.

About NIE Networks

NIE Networks owns and maintains Northern Ireland's electricity network, including approximately 2,300km of transmission and 50,000km of distribution power lines, delivering electricity safely and reliably to around 932,000 homes, farms and businesses every day.

Electricity networks do more than keep the lights on. They support economic growth, strengthen energy security and enable Northern Ireland's transition to a cleaner and more sustainable future. NIE Networks is currently undertaking significant investment to support the growth of renewable electricity generation and the increased adoption of electric vehicles, heat pumps and other low-carbon technologies.

The Northern Ireland Energy Strategy

The successful delivery of Energy Strategy is essential if Northern Ireland is to meet its statutory decarbonisation and net zero commitments. It has provided an important long-term framework for the energy transition and has given greater confidence for infrastructure investment required to support renewable generation, electrification and economic growth.

The Strategy has already delivered important outcomes. These include the publication of the final scheme design for the Renewable Electricity Price Guarantee, supporting continued investment in renewable generation; the Smart Meter Design Plan, which will help deliver a more efficient and flexible electricity system while providing greater value for customers; and reforms to connection charging arrangements, making network connections more accessible and affordable while supporting Northern Ireland's long-term decarbonisation and economic objectives.

While the Energy Strategy provides a strong framework, successful implementation also requires wider policy architecture, including the development and delivery of a Northern Ireland Climate Action Plan. It is also important to ensure that government departments, the regulator and delivery organisations are

adequately resourced and equipped to fulfil their respective roles. Delivering the scale and pace of change required will depend on sufficient institutional capacity, supported by the necessary expertise, skills and long-term resources to translate strategic ambition into successful outcomes.

From our perspective, the Strategy has had a positive impact by providing both direction and investment certainty. However, the pace of critical infrastructure delivery could be enhanced through greater collaboration across the whole system, including electricity, water, heat, transport and planning, alongside closer coordination between government, the Utility Regulator, and infrastructure providers.

Additionally, a more integrated and plan-led approach would build on the strong foundations established by the Energy Strategy and help ensure that the infrastructure needed for decarbonisation is delivered in a coordinated and timely way. By improving coordination between infrastructure providers and aligning long-term investment plans, we believe Northern Ireland can accelerate delivery, support economic growth and strengthen energy security while maintaining progress towards net zero.

Supporting Delivery of the Energy Strategy

Looking ahead, NIE Networks believes the following areas should be considered to further support delivery of the Energy Strategy and Northern Ireland's wider economic ambitions:

- Use electricity to enable economic growth, recognising the critical role a modern electricity system plays in attracting investment, improving competitiveness and creating jobs.
- A more joined-up approach between Government and critical infrastructure organisations to expedite the delivery of strategic infrastructure projects.
- Accelerate industrial decarbonisation through the development of an Industrial Decarbonisation Plan and by attracting businesses that can benefit from Northern Ireland's renewable energy resources.
- Support household electrification through appropriate standards, incentives and practical advice that help consumers adopt low-carbon heating and transport.
- Enable a smarter energy system through smart meter deployment and tariff reform that encourage the efficient use of clean electricity.

NIE Networks remains committed to working collaboratively with the Northern Ireland Executive, the Utility Regulator, industry and other stakeholders to help meet Northern Ireland's future energy needs in a just, fair and affordable manner. As the owner and operator of the electricity network, we are committed to supporting the energy transition and delivering the infrastructure required to achieve Northern Ireland's decarbonisation goals.

We would be pleased to engage further with the Committee as it considers these important issues.

Yours sincerely,

Ciaran McManus
Managing Director
NIE Networks