

Northern Ireland Affairs Committee

Oral evidence: Renewable Energy and Net Zero in Northern Ireland, HC 428

Wednesday 17 January 2024

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[Watch the meeting](#)

Members present: Sir Robert Buckland (Chair); Stephen Farry; Mary Kelly Foy; Sir Robert Goodwill; Claire Hanna; Carla Lockhart; Jim Shannon.

Questions 31 - 46

Witnesses

[II](#): John French, Chief Executive, Utility Regulator NI; Gareth Brown, Head of Communications and Engagement, SONI Ltd; Roger Henderson, Network Investment Director, NIE Networks.

Written evidence from witnesses:

– [\[REN0002\]](#) – SONI (System Operator for Northern Ireland)

Examination of witnesses

Witnesses: John French, Gareth Brown and Roger Henderson.

Chair: Thank you very much indeed. I am delighted to welcome John French, the chief executive of the Utility Regulator of Northern Ireland; Gareth Brown, the head of communications and engagement for SONI Ltd; and Roger Henderson, the network investment director of NIE Networks. Welcome, gentlemen. I am going to ask Jim Shannon to lead off very quickly.

Q31 **Jim Shannon:** I am very pleased to see you here, gentlemen, ever conscious of the timescale and where we are. I want to ask a question that is specifically to do with the main priorities of your organisation and where you think we are in Northern Ireland.

I am conscious that Gordon Lyons, who was the Minister responsible, outlined a vision that I suspect every one of you would adhere to and support. It was to do with energy efficiency, renewables and the green economy. He set targets that I think are achievable. Just give us your thoughts on it, please.

Roger Henderson: We welcome the opportunity to be here today. I represent Northern Ireland Electricity Networks. Just to give you some context, we own the transmission and distribution networks in Northern Ireland, transporting electricity to and from some 910,000 customers.

Our role involves maintaining the network to ensure it is safe and reliable, and extending the network to ensure we can connect new customers. We also own the meters in Northern Ireland, which is different to here in GB, and supply the metering data to the suppliers. We play a key role, connecting all those parties in the network in relation to distributing energy sources, from the large to the small, to those who need it and use it.

Our business is a key enabler to achieving net zero not only for our own power sector but for supporting the decarbonisation of heat and transport through electrification. Combined, these sectors contribute almost half of carbon emissions. There is a real imperative to ensure that we develop the network in time to support these sectors.

We have been working hard with our stakeholders and developing our plans for the next six years. They represent the collective view of what we need to do to the network to fulfil our ambitions.

At the minute, our priority is our business plan from 2025 through to 2031. It sets out the amount of work that is needed in the electricity network, how much it will cost and the benefits to homes and businesses in Northern Ireland. By 2030, we will have spent close to about £4 billion creating capacity, maintaining reliability and providing access to the



HOUSE OF COMMONS

electricity network, which will bring Northern Ireland closer to achieving its net zero responsibilities.

Over the next 10 years, we must more than double the amount of renewable generation connected to transmission and distribution networks. We must grow from about 1.9 GW to almost 5 GW by the mid-2030s. Investment and ambitious management of the electricity network becomes a gateway to delivering in terms of our net zero ambitions.

While our priority in the business at the minute is getting agreement on the business plan that is currently with the Utility Regulator, we are very much focused on building capacity within the organisation in relation to preparing for this transition.

Currently, the organisation runs at about 1,250 people, and we have ramped that up by another 200. We are progressively building capacity in terms of our staff, resourcing and contractors. We are also building capacity on the network with an additional £50 million of funding from the regulator over the last year, and we are starting to deploy that to develop additional capacity in the network.

In relation to what we see as the key challenges for us going ahead currently, I would probably articulate three. The first is to keep the consumer at the heart of this transition. We have heard this morning that it is really important to do that, through education and engagement in terms of how consumers can contribute to the energy transition.

Many customers—this is what we see—are starting to take ownership for their own energy use, patterns and consumption. To extract the maximum benefit from that, we need to get a plan together in terms of how we move forward with smart metering and our tariff structures.

Secondly, we have already touched on how important the planning system is, not only for the renewables sector. We also have to build out capacity on the network for the wider customer base, and we need to bring forward plans to both DfI and local councils.

It was mentioned that the NI Chamber of Commerce report outlines that for major applications they are almost running at double the time of the statutory target. That needs to improve. We need more resources for planning, DfI, local councils and the statutory consultees.

The third priority is encouraging the much-needed private investment that has really been mentioned here this morning in terms of the amount of progress. The word used here this morning was “exceptional”. Yes, we have made exceptional progress, and sometimes in Northern Ireland we understate that, but we really have to keep the momentum moving forward through an appropriately designed incentive scheme.

We also need to look at the wider issues affecting investment in Northern Ireland. That is about the charging policy. The regulator, jointly with DfE,



HOUSE OF COMMONS

is looking at the current charging arrangements for people connecting to our network. Our customers are telling us that that can be a barrier to investment in Northern Ireland.

We also need to be looking a bit further forward in terms of the investment and meeting the need ahead of time. We refer to that as anticipatory investment, in that we build out the network so that it is there to encourage the investment that we need. In essence, those are our business priorities at the minute.

Jim Shannon: That was very comprehensive. Thank you.

John French: We are the Utility Regulator. We are a non-ministerial Government Department. We have a statutory responsibility to economically regulate the electricity sector in Northern Ireland, along with gas, water and sewerage.

We currently have about 120 staff. We are restructuring at the moment and developing that, but our main statutory duty is to protect consumers in Northern Ireland. We are currently looking at our strategy for the next five years.

Consumer protection is very much our No. 1 priority. How do we support consumers in terms of the transition justly so that they can continue to afford their energy? We are looking for the best possible companies in Northern Ireland, so we are looking for best practice within the energy and water sector and supporting the Government in their journey to net zero.

As a regulator, we are similar to Ofwat and Ofgem in GB. We do not develop policy; we help the Government implement policy. That is our role within the sector.

Gareth Brown: Thank you for the question. It is great to be here, so thank you for the invitation to be with you today. SONI—or the System Operator for Northern Ireland, as it spells out—is Northern Ireland's transmission system operator. We are licensed to do that independently, and in doing so we are regulated by John and his team at the Utility Regulator.

Our priorities align loosely to what our core purposes are. For the interests of this inquiry, they are effectively twofold. We run the electricity grid, the high-voltage electricity transmission system in real time, 24/7, 365, from our control centre in Belfast. Perhaps more importantly for this inquiry, we have a responsibility for planning and upgrading the electricity grid to be able to facilitate the level of renewables that we require in order to deliver on the Department for the Economy's 80% energy targets.

You are probably going to find a lot of agreement between us on this panel and those from whom you heard this morning. From our



perspective, there is a dual opportunity and a dual challenge of ensuring that consumers have a stable supply of electricity in the day we are in now and fundamentally altering how we transport electricity around the grid in what is going to be a fundamentally different electricity system.

It used to be based on large conventional generators. When you require electricity, you can simply turn them on. We are moving to a system that is going to be reliant on variable weather-dependent sources of renewable energy going forward. That presents some operational challenges.

In terms of our second priority, about ensuring that the grid can facilitate this level of renewable energy, it is really important to understand that this is the biggest change to the electricity system since it was built. We are effectively trying to double the level of renewables integration in less than 10 years. It took us approximately 15 years to get to the 40% target in 2020 through a lot of close collaboration and excellent work among stakeholders across industry.

The scale of the challenge is unprecedented, but, encouragingly, we know what we have to do. We know what the substantive policy direction is. Our key priority in SONI is to work with colleagues, to understand what the remaining barriers are to getting there and to seek proactively opportunities to accelerate things, where we can.

Q32 Claire Hanna: Jim set the scene in his questions about the barriers, but how would you characterise our progress towards net zero as regards renewables? Could you just identify what you think the key challenges to that are? I might start with you, Gareth.

Gareth Brown: I would probably echo some of the things that Derek from Energia said in the first panel. It is really important to acknowledge the significant progress that Northern Ireland has made in reaching the 40% target, which was set in 2010, a year early. That was done through a lot of innovation in the existing system and close collaboration.

Indeed, Northern Ireland is among the only power systems in the world that can handle 75% of what we call system non-synchronous penetration, which effectively means the amount of renewable electricity that we are capable of handling at any one moment in time. There are virtually no other power systems across the world that are able to do that.

We have come a really long way, but the scale of getting to where we need to be from now by 2030, as I mentioned in my last answer, is unprecedented. Again, we have continued to make progress as an industry in lots of different areas.

From a SONI perspective, we have worked with our colleagues in NIE Networks on a number of really key pieces of grid infrastructure since



HOUSE OF COMMONS

2021 to get those over the line, to respond to the need for additional grid capacity and to facilitate that investment in generation that we need.

The barriers are loosely threefold, from a SONI perspective. First, they are about managing those system operational challenges in the short term. We have a variable climate in Northern Ireland. The peaks between winter and summer are very significant. We have to do that while ensuring that consumers have a stable electricity supply at all times in the present day that we are in. There are some operational challenges to bringing on that level of renewable generation while ensuring that security of supply in the short term. We have the road maps in place to manage that.

Technology will play a really important part in terms of long-duration energy storage and low-carbon system services, such as inertia, that help us maintain the really important system stability that we need. There are some short-term challenges there.

As we have heard already, the scale of the infrastructure that we need to deliver, working in partnership with our colleagues in NIE, is huge. That is more grid, more pylons, more overhead cables and more underground cables. We have talked a lot about planning today. A timely and meaningful reform in the planning system to enable us to do that is a critical enabler of getting to 2030.

There is one last challenge that we would identify. The approach that we have taken so far has tended to be what we call quite developer-led. We have developed the grid reactively and in response to a request to connect to it.

We see an opportunity to work with our colleagues in the Utility Regulator, NIE Networks and others in order to shift our posture to a more proactive and strategic investment in the grid going forward, so we are taking more risk in terms of that investment on the understanding that we know the demand for that investment in new generation is going to come at some point. That can help us shorten those timescales and respond to some of the concerns that the industry has about grid capacity.

We have made enormous progress, but now is the time to really seek the opportunity to remove the remaining barriers, put our foot down and accelerate where we can.

Q33 Claire Hanna: That is encouraging and logical in terms of how we go forward. John, I will ask you the same question. What is your assessment of the progress and the key barriers?

John French: As everyone says, to be fair to Northern Ireland, we are world leaders in terms of wind generation on our system. When we talk to other regulators across Europe, they are surprised. Other countries have hydro, which is quite a stable form of renewables. In terms of wind



HOUSE OF COMMONS

generation, we are world leaders. We need to be proud of that. We also brought on biomethane into the gas network for the first time back in November last year. The whole of Dungannon is now powered by renewable gas. There are a lot of good things going on.

It is right to say that over the last couple of years we have taken our foot off the accelerator. We need to put our foot back on the accelerator to meet those 2030 targets. As you can see around the room and from the previous panel, everyone is clear on the direction of travel. It is just about getting that clear road map towards it.

We also have to recognise that Northern Ireland is different. Just using ESB's research, we have two and a half times the amount of grid compared to GB and six times more grid than continental Europe just because of how we have planned Northern Ireland, where the houses are and the rural nature. It will cost more to provide people with electric vehicles or heat pumps, if we want to do that.

The size of our population is a big barrier as well. In terms of economies of scale, we are trying to spread the cost across 1.9 million people, but GB is doing it across 65 million.

The other really big factor is the economic ability of our residents. Discretionary income in Northern Ireland is half of what it is in GB. Although energy prices in the energy crisis were quite often lower than GB at the time, the impact was greater just because of the income levels of households.

It is about trying to balance all these things up. We are doing a good job. We need to put our foot back on the accelerator. We need a clear road map out to 2030.

Q34 Claire Hanna: It is a good point that the consumer is on the hook for all of this, particularly without the investment. That is something we forget. Specifically to you, John, those are the practical or physical parts. What about the regulatory parts? What are the regulatory challenges in the energy system?

John French: The main regulatory challenge that we have at the moment is that our statutory powers are 20 years old. The last major piece of legislation for us was 2003. Ofgem, our equivalent in GB, has had 15 pieces of legislation. We have no powers to support the Climate Change Act. We need powers to be able to support fully the Government in terms of their move to net zero.

We are trying to use old bits of legislation and old statutory powers to meet the modern world. We need our legislative powers to come up to date with our equivalent numbers in Ireland and Great Britain. We are behind on that.

Q35 Claire Hanna: Where is that at the moment? Do you know what you need?



John French: We are working with the Department for the Economy at the moment to try to bring in interim legislation, which will help us do research around what is needed to be done. A new energy Bill, we were told, will take another three years, but we desperately need that. All the time we are having to make compromises and stretch our existing legislation to make it meet what the future holds. Ofgem and our equivalent in Ireland, CRU, do not have to do that. It hamstrings us.

Q36 **Claire Hanna:** Roger, what are the key barriers?

Roger Henderson: In terms of where we are at and how we would imagine that, the boldness in our ambition needs to be matched with the boldness in our action. Certainly, in terms of the legislation, we agree with the strategies outlined in the energy strategy. In terms of the regulatory framework, as John mentioned, the energy order is by and large the framework that provides energy regulation. Does that really fully reflect the Climate Change Act ambitions as such? We welcome the steps that are being taken here to move that forward.

Generally—Derek mentioned it earlier—this is system-wide. We need to look across the system. It is not just a renewables issue in terms of what we need to do to achieve net zero. In terms of integration, we need better departmental co-operation and better alignment through the whole end-to-end process here.

In relation to the barriers, we probably outlined a number of those earlier. The immediate issue is planning reform and some of the charging issues within the policy. That is all enshrined by the framework that John has mentioned in terms of incorporating net zero into his vires.

Q37 **Stephen Farry:** Good morning to all our witnesses. I just wanted to ask two questions, in a sense to follow up, to all three of you.

The first one is just about the system as a whole. I am struck that there are a lot of players in the Northern Ireland energy market. You have all stressed that there is a consensus on the policy direction and people are working in alignment. Without sparking any unnecessary disagreement, are there any tensions between the organisations at present in terms of how things should be done to take forward the overall policy over the years ahead?

Secondly, could I invite you to say a little bit more about planning? That has been widely identified as a major barrier that has to be faced. In particular, Gareth, I am conscious that SONI has had its scars over the past decade with the second north-south interconnector. You may want to reflect upon that.

All three of you could talk through how the planning system could change to take decisions more effectively in that respect.

Gareth Brown: I would not characterise them as tensions between necessarily the stakeholders as such or the different players, but you are absolutely right to point out the complexity of the structure of the



HOUSE OF COMMONS

Northern Ireland electricity system. There are the three of us here, for example, but there are a multitude of others, including local communities, consumers, developers, suppliers and all of that.

From the point of view of where SONI sits in the system, and our colleagues in NIE to a degree as well, it is probably more accurate to describe it as a wide set of competing priorities. All of us have slightly different points of emphasis in terms of what needs to happen in order to get this job done and meet these energy targets.

From a SONI point of view, we have a statutory responsibility to ensure security of supply for the consumer in the day that we are in. That creates some operational challenges as to how quickly we can decarbonise the power system and how quickly we can bring these renewables on. As you will know, to put it quite crassly and simply, the wind does not always blow and the sun does not always shine. We are still working with colleagues to get the technology that we need to manage that in the long term.

There are lots of different points of emphasis and degrees of priority. That underlines the importance of close collaboration and working together to arrive at balanced solutions that take account of all those different points of emphasis.

That slightly folds into your second point about the planning system and, again, the importance of bringing local communities and consumers with us. I was struck by the figure in the Consumer Council's research that Peter alluded to earlier: 56% of people who were asked would support energy infrastructure in their local communities. The scale of the infrastructure that we have to ultimately plan and construct over the next six or seven years is unprecedented. You pointed to the challenges we have had with the north-south interconnector.

It is really important that we redouble our efforts to make the case to local communities about the need for this and what the long-term benefits are. We have mentioned a few times today the link between more renewables on the system and lower electricity prices in the future. There is more that we can all do to help consumers understand the longer-term benefits of that.

We were quite struck by the Electricity Networks Commissioner's report in GB about accelerating the development of the transmission infrastructure. One of the recommendations that Nick Winser made was around a Government-led "hearts and minds" campaign, for want of a better term, to go back out to local communities and restate the importance of this.

Just finally, on the specific point about the planning system, we are fully behind the industry's call for meaningful and timely reform. Some of the statistics that are drawn to light in RenewableNI's report, in terms of



HOUSE OF COMMONS

three years, are troubling when we think about what we have to get through the planning system in the next six years.

We are open-minded about what the solutions to those look like. There are going to be opportunities for us to work more collaboratively with the industry on both the planning of the grid and the planning of the actual development, but we need to crack on.

John French: The tensions are about whether everything is correctly set up. We are always getting judicially reviewed or tested through the courts to check we have done this or that correctly. That is why our statutory powers are so important.

On this subject, everyone is together on the direction of travel. Over the last two days, we hosted the UK Regulators Network in Belfast for the first time. All the UK regulators came across to Belfast. They were surprised at how we know each other and can talk to each other. They were saying that they miss that here in Great Britain. There is that correct tension, but there is also a commonality and common purpose. We need to work together and understand the different places we are coming from to achieve that.

In terms of planning, we do not have a direct role in that, but planning is mentioned all the time as one of the main barriers.

Just to take the opportunity around the north-south interconnector, it is still very much needed. We have kept the lights on. The coal-fired power station in Kilroot was closed last year, which reduced emissions in Northern Ireland, but security of supply is still a big issue. There is also an economic element to it. All-Ireland consumers pay at least an extra £40 million a year because of the lack of a north-south interconnector. If that was there, a lot of the constraint costs and imperfections charges on the network, which people are having to pay for, would be removed and we would have a better single electricity market. The north-south interconnector is still very much needed.

Roger Henderson: In terms of the different customer groups and perspectives, it means different things to different groups. We have done a lot of engagement in developing our business plan for RP7 with those various groups.

If I think back to what John has indicated there, there was a consensus in that response that this was needed and needed urgently, and that we should get on with it. Those are the principles that we have adopted. We need to get more anticipatory in terms of looking at investment and driving that forward.

It always comes back to ensuring that the customer is at the heart of that transition and the policy framework. We are talking about initiatives, incentives and the design of those. It is about understanding the impact of participation and how you get that engagement. If you can get



engagement with domestic customers, and participate in energy markets through incentives to generate at a small and micro level, that creates awareness and understanding; it creates better acceptance for why these bigger projects are needed.

In the desire to hit bigger numbers, we sometimes focus on scale and economies, but we cannot afford to lose sight of the impact at an individual and behavioural level and the benefits that that would bring. As we work through that, it is really important to keep that principle right at the very heart and centre.

In relation to planning and the north-south interconnector, we would broadly support what Gareth and John have said. We just need to get a more efficient process, get it adequately resourced and get decisions made on a timely basis.

Q38 Sir Robert Goodwill: We have been talking about the north-south interconnector, but the island of Ireland is becoming even more connected to the GB market with the Moyle interconnector. That is going to be increasing capacity. We have the connection into Wales. The Greenlink is going to be a new connection. In 2027 the Celtic interconnector between Cork and France will be there.

Is this only about security of supply? Would Ireland become a net exporter of green electricity and help other parts of the United Kingdom and other parts of Europe to achieve their green targets? If we subsidise some of this green energy, will we be subsidising consumers outside Ireland?

Gareth Brown: The point about interconnection is a very important one when we look to 2030 and even further beyond. You are absolutely right to point out Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland's potential for both onshore and offshore wind in the future as being potentially a European leader in terms of the scale of generation and the size of our relative populations.

Interestingly, you touched on security of supply there. This is where interconnection becomes very important because we could arrive in a scenario where we are generating so much renewable electricity from offshore and onshore wind that it needs to go somewhere. I talked a little earlier about the importance of long-duration energy storage.

Sir Robert Goodwill: Yes, or hydrogen.

Gareth Brown: Yes, and that is a way to use energy in Northern Ireland at times when the wind is not blowing and the sun is not shining.

Interconnection is going to be a really crucial technological enabler of getting beyond 2030 and being able to manage a secure system in that context. In the Republic of Ireland, they now have a specific interconnection policy and a specific hydrogen policy. From a SONI perspective, we would certainly be up for a conversation about what the



HOUSE OF COMMONS

policies in that space would look like in Northern Ireland, again to help us look beyond that 2030 space.

It does create a lot of significant economic opportunity in terms of our ability to export to other markets. That will necessarily depend on what other parts of Europe and Great Britain indeed decide to do in terms of their own policies as well. We need to ensure there are good and coherent linkages there. From our perspective, we play a really active role in the European Network of Transmission System Operators in terms of trying to co-ordinate that policy on a European level. There is a significant opportunity.

- Q39 **Sir Robert Goodwill:** Northern Ireland is particularly well suited to introducing hydrogen into the gas network. It is a fairly new network and better than anywhere else in the UK. Are we facing a decision of using that green resource to benefit our own people in Northern Ireland or exporting that electricity to other parts of the continent? Is that something we should think about carefully?

Gareth Brown: Yes. That is a very important policy question, again looking beyond 2030. As I mentioned, we could arrive in this slightly counterintuitive scenario where we have too much renewable electricity and we need to do something with it. It cannot just stay on the grid. The two options are either to export it and try to gain some economic advantage from that or, as you pointed out, use it domestically.

In our “Tomorrow’s Energy Scenarios” report, which we have been consulting on recently, we look at some scenarios out ahead past 2030. Certainly, green hydrogen is one potential technology.

- Q40 **Sir Robert Goodwill:** Is that a political decision that elected people should make or should we let the market address it and whichever is the most economically advantageous will be the way to go?

Gareth Brown: As a system—and it is a whole system, which includes organisations like ours that have the experience and expertise to advise—we probably need to come together and decide on a definitive policy direction beyond 2030 on some of these big questions.

Sir Robert Goodwill: We have a break at 11.30 so we will probably stop now, though I am sure the other two witnesses would have a comment to make.

Chair: Thank you very much indeed. I will bring in Carla Lockhart very briefly. We will see how far we can go with her questions.

- Q41 **Carla Lockhart:** I fear my questions will take longer than a few minutes. I have said to the Chair that I am happy to put them in writing. The first one was really around the EU carbon border. This is for you, John. What impact will that have on future prices for energy consumers? Is it your understanding that the sale of electricity between Great Britain and Northern Ireland would be subject to new green taxes? Is that likely to



disrupt supply?

John French: At the moment, we are part of the single electricity market. Our generators have to pay the European cost of carbon compared to GB generators, which pay the GB price. At the moment, there is quite a price differential. The GB price late last week was £36 a tonne. The European price is just over €65 a tonne. That is automatically adding 20 quid to consumers' bills in Northern Ireland, because we are paying the European rate compared to the GB generators.

Going back to what I was saying earlier, there are market differences between what Northern Ireland consumers pay compared to those in GB.

Q42 **Carla Lockhart:** Is that going to get worse?

John French: I suppose it depends. The GB carbon price has just dropped off in the last year or so. The European market is a bit stronger, but it is that differential. We would be keen to know where those moneys go. I think they go to Treasury. It would be interesting to see whether they could eventually come back to Northern Ireland. That is something we are trying to follow up.

Q43 **Carla Lockhart:** Is it your understanding that the sale of electricity between Great Britain and Northern Ireland would be subject to the new green taxes?

John French: The carbon price is already baked in. It is an all-Ireland price for electricity. It is baked into that price.

Q44 **Carla Lockhart:** I also have a question for Gareth in relation to assurances to the public in Northern Ireland that concerns identified by the Utility Regulator around the necessary independence of SONI from policy set in Dublin will not lead to consumers in Northern Ireland getting a raw deal when it comes to meeting renewable targets in the context of a single electricity market. What assurances can you give?

Gareth Brown: Yes, the Utility Regulator published a decision in August 2022, I believe it was, on the requirements for changes to our licence. We have commenced the process of implementing those and we are working closely with John and his team to deliver on those obligations.

As you will be aware, they loosely refer to more operational and managerial independence from SONI in relation to its relationship with our group company, EirGrid. That work is well underway. I can provide an assurance that both our teams are working collaboratively to work through those licence requirements and ensure that SONI is well resourced and skilled up to be a strong independent transmission system operator for consumers in Northern Ireland.

Q45 **Carla Lockhart:** Is the Utility Regulator content that those suggestions and recommendations are being adhered to by SONI so as to protect consumers in Northern Ireland?



John French: Yes, we are really encouraged. They have implemented a new board. We have had meetings chair to chair and CEO to CEO. SONI has been very proactive around generation capacity over this winter and modelling it out for Northern Ireland. We just hope that continues. Yes, it is very positive.

Q46 **Carla Lockhart:** Finally and very quickly, I have a question for NIE. If you want to come back in writing, that is absolutely fine. It was just around the transition to more renewable electricity and the impact for NIE around skills development, staff, headcount, the implication for your substations and your estate, and demand and how you will cope with the demand for connections to the grid. I am happy for you to come back in writing, because I have to go to the Chamber.

Roger Henderson: At a high level, as I mentioned, we are already ramping up capacity in the organisation. We have increased our numbers by 200. We can come back to you with a bit more detail.

Chair: Thank you very much indeed. I am grateful to the panel. The reason we are rising with a hard stop is that it is Northern Ireland oral questions. That is why we all have to go to the Chamber.

I thank the panel for their oral and indeed written evidence as well. We will follow up with some further questions in writing, but I thank both panels for their evidence today.