





## **Contents**



## Introduction

Stakeholder engagement drives our business

We are Northern Powergrid, a company that manages a complex distribution network, powering everyday life for more than 8 million people covering Yorkshire, the North East and northern Lincolnshire. We want to understand the widest possible range of stakeholders' views in detail and then make sure we're using them, constantly, to help us make better decisions.

Stakeholders' views enable us to identify issues and overcome challenges, both in our local communities and the wider industry.

They shape our teams' working practices and empower our entire business operation. The insights we glean, inside and outside our sector, are the tools that keep us agile, hold our own work to account, and ensure we're well-prepared to respond and be pro-active in an ever-changing ecosystem of energy demands.

In this document, we present Northern Powergrid's Stakeholder Engagement Methodology and this is the platform from which we continue to deliver on our commitment to be a stakeholderled organisation. It guides our approach and we will keep it under continuous review.

## Every part of our business is influenced by stakeholder engagement

### Who are our stakeholders?

We have many types of stakeholders and in our everyday work we might think of 'corporate stakeholders' as being shareholders, partners, suppliers or regulators. We could also use the word to describe customers and members of the public whose diverse needs and views should be constantly informing our objectives and the way we operate. However, the AccountAbility AA1000 Stakeholder Engagement Standard, against which we benchmark our work, does provide us with a specific definition.

Stakeholder means 'any individual, group of individuals, or organisations that affect and/or could be affected by (our) activities, products or services, and/or associated performance'.





### **Engagement Pillars**

Our ambition for engagement is shaped by a commitment to excellence in four areas.

- Inclusive: We will ensure that our engagement reaches and includes a diverse range of individuals, groups, experts, and locations that represent the communities we serve.
- Accessible: We will increase the use of new communications channels, remove engagement barriers, and increase cooperation with a wide range of local organisations so innovative thinkers and future customers access and contribute to our engagement.
- Relevant: We will provide additional ways to discuss complex topics and tailor communication approaches so that we deliver engagement that promotes an understanding of priority topics such as decarbonisation and an inclusive energy transition.
- Continuously improving: We will continue to mature the skills, processes, infrastructure, and capacity of communities, customers, and our own teams to ensure engagement is two-way, measurable, and transparent.





## <sup>2</sup> Stakeholder Engagement Methodology and Approach

Our stakeholders' needs and views should shape our business

We're constantly seeking out the widest range of stakeholders' views. We record what people tell us in everyday interactions: we collect feedback via social media listening; we gather insights from forums and events and collect information through stakeholder engagement platforms. This ordered approach enables us to analyse the results consistently and use them to hone our business strategy and improve our day-to-day service and operations with confidence, constantly.

By working collaboratively, we can make much better decisions

Being guided by our stakeholders' views, empowers us to make better decisions. It means we're better equipped to meet the needs and aspirations of individuals, communities and wider society. It also helps us understand business challenges, recognise new opportunities, prioritise what is important and ensure we have a positive impact on the customers and communities we serve.

## In Practice

Stakeholder engagement isn't a job for an engagement team acting alone, it's a business-wide activity. Everyone should have a view, everyone can play their part. What's more, the strongest methodologies are the ones that provide a continuous feedback loop. This makes sure optimised engagement is being fed back into the business, all of the time.

At Northern Powergrid we synchronise our **Engagement Planning** activity with a Stakeholder-Based Decision Making process to create optimal stakeholder engagement

### **Engagement Planning**

Our Stakeholder Engagement Team is accountable for maintaining the systems and processes that let us:

- o identify relevant stakeholders, particularly the hard-to-reach or seldon heard.
- o understand stakeholder constraints and opportunities, and,
- optimise our activity so that stakeholder-based decisions are guaranteed to be measurable, robust, and thorough.

The team works collaboratively right across the business, connecting with operations, front-line Customer Services, the wider community and the Executive Team.

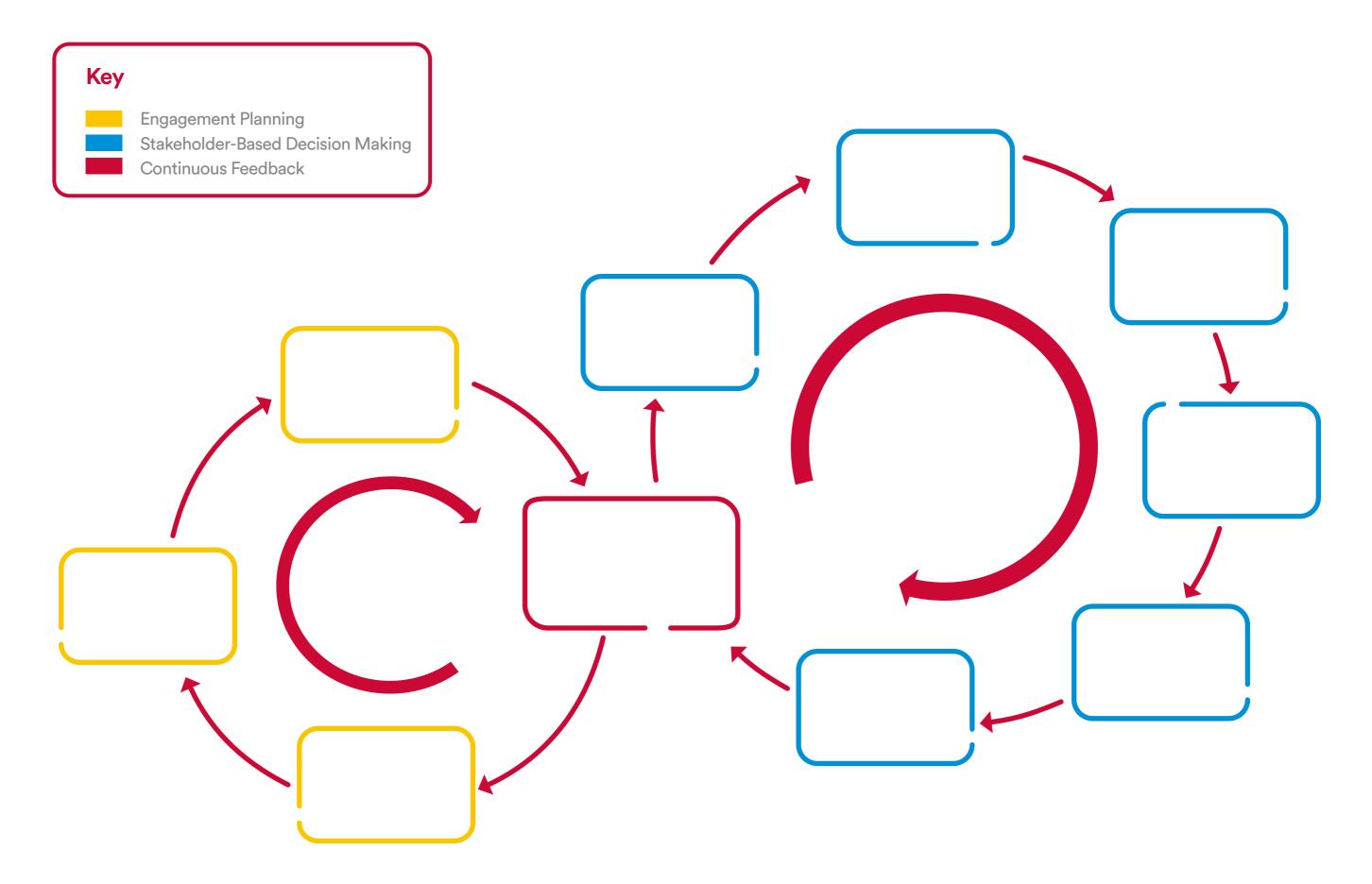
## **Stakeholder-Based Decision Making**

Our decision-making process gets impacted directly by the insights we glean from stakeholder engagement. Decisions are made by correlating and triangulating those needs, views, and priorities against our own expertise and experience, business aims, and wider industry and regulatory insights. By working this way, we can trace every decision back to a clearly-defined stakeholder insight.

We're also committed to letting stakeholders know how their feedback leads to a course of action, and to demonstrating measurable progress from those actions.

Our rigorous Learning and Refining process lets us keep a close check on the quality of our work, and we take this evaluation right down to community level. In addition to reviewing the impact on the business, we also cross-check these findings against our Understand and Adapt process. This gives us that cycle of continuous improvement and delivers outcomes we can measure and share with stakeholders.









## **Engagement Planning**

### **Identifying Stakeholders**

### **Ensuring diverse viewpoints**

A diverse range of stakeholders' views enables us to identify business-wide ambition and define project-specific purpose. Those refined insights come from two activities that happen in parallel:

## Stakeholder maintenance

We organise our database into key groups, mapping over 6000+ stakeholders against a proprietary segmentation model. Those segments are then ranked by influence and impact against specific topics.

This data stays under regular review to ensure we're meeting if not exceeding all relevant data protection criteria.

We also conduct an in-depth annual audit that's aligned to our mapping, making sure our stakeholders are a diverse community of individuals, and that we can understand their demographics through a high level of detail.

### Analysis and discovery.

We interrogate the bank of stakeholders, gleaning the most informed insights and views for each project:

**Internal insights.** Internal subject matter experts tell us who'll be impacted, who should be heard and therefore who to engage.

**Third party research.** Specialist research companies identify who could be impacted, and they help us to reach wider cohort of stakeholders.

**Anticipate and identify.** Our Future Fairness Panel helps us to identify emerging hard to reach groups and ensure nobody is left behind.

**Social media listening.** Social media channels are active 24-hours a day. So, we listen, constantly, taking note of people who've expressed an interest in the topic and relevant people or groups we haven't heard from.

Community partner outreach. We connect with community partners, inviting them to be stakeholders, participate on our advisory panels and work collaboratively to increase our understanding and reach.

Stakeholder recommendations. We ask for recommendations for groups who may be impacted, from engaged stakeholders, creating an ever-expanding pool of contacts.





## **Engagement Planning**

## Inclusive engagement

We have a mature, embedded hard-to-reach strategy that recognises the importance of engaging with traditionally under-represented groups and those who struggle to engage with us due to vulnerabilities and circumstantial difficulties. As part of our continuous improvement process in 2020/21 we shifted to a more holistic approach framework that we believe gives better results for our stakeholders and customers.

Following research into best practice from in and out of industry, UK and globally we have used the UN-approved 'Nobody left behind' framework approach of 'Examine, Empower, Enact' to develop our own "Nobody left behind" model tailored to energy, future energy markets and our regional social issues current and future. This approach, has been examined, challenged and approved by our Future Fairness Panel and our Social Issues Expert Groups.

The framework sets our approach, which we deliver through supporting processes, tools, policies and activities.

## There are a number of reasons a customer may be at risk of being left behind, including:

- Vulnerability Customers who are less able to represent themselves or their interests in the energy market
- Hard to reach: Customers who have not engaged before or who are unlikely to engage, and who experience a range of engagement barriers
- Seldom heard: Broader stakeholders who have not been engaged before, or whose voices have been under-represented in our engagement previously

Approach	Examine Identifying and understanding who is being left behind and why	Empower Tailoring approach for inclusive and representative engagement and participation	Enact Ensuring future policies, services and approach are fair and remove barriers to participation
Processes	Identifying seldom heard and hard to reach      Understanding socio economic make up of our region      Identifying current and future social issues and barriers to energy market	<ul> <li>Tailoring our engagement approach for inclusivity and accessibility</li> <li>Representative engagement and partnerships</li> </ul>	<ul> <li>Ensuring our current and future services are fair and equitable</li> <li>Lobby on behalf of our underrepresented customers and stakeholder groups for fair and equitable policies, regulation and distribution of costs</li> </ul>
Enabling activity and policy examples	Social listening  Annual stakeholder mapping and participation review  Pre-engagement planning by issue  Identifying individuals and groups barriers - physical, emotional, societal, attitudinal, organisational, cultural, practical  Experian data  Inclusivity and representation tool  Existing partners and expert panels intelligence and horizon scanning  Regular research into current and future social issues  Smart and Fair?  Capability lens	<ul> <li>Pre-engagement planning to overcome barriers</li> <li>Energy IQ resources</li> <li>Multiple engagement channels</li> <li>Inclusivity and representation tool and principles</li> <li>Expanding partnerships to close gaps</li> </ul>	<ul> <li>T DSO transition principles</li> <li>Flexibility offers</li> <li>Smart and Fair?     Offer profiling tool</li> <li>Well evidenced     consultation responses</li> </ul>

## **Engagement Planning**

## **Understand and Adapt**

We work hard to make sure we're engaging with hard-to-reach, vulnerable and time-poor individuals – adapting our processes where and when it's necessary. We also take internal and external constraints seriously. Every stakeholder is 'weighted' and given the characteristics (or 'flags') that will tell us more about:

- who they are and how we impact them,
- what they're interested in,
- how they prefer to be engaged,
- o how we've engaged with them already, and,
- the most effective types of engagement.

That segmentation, and the way we tailor our approach, lets us refine how we deploy our resources and make sure we're using our time effectively.

## Our methodology boosts confidence throughout

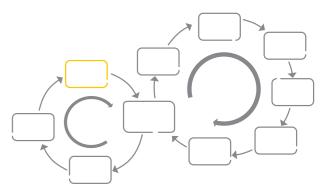
Regular audits signpost any imbalance in our database. We can then focus on filling those gaps to make sure we have an inclusive group of stakeholders. Nobody gets left behind.

An annual audit also helps us keep our database clean, flagging anything we need to do in terms of gathering extra information or re-verifying existing data. Polling and lateral research are an integral part of our engagement tactics, and we know that an increase in the quantity of feedback we're gathering helps us to improve the outputs from our engagement work.

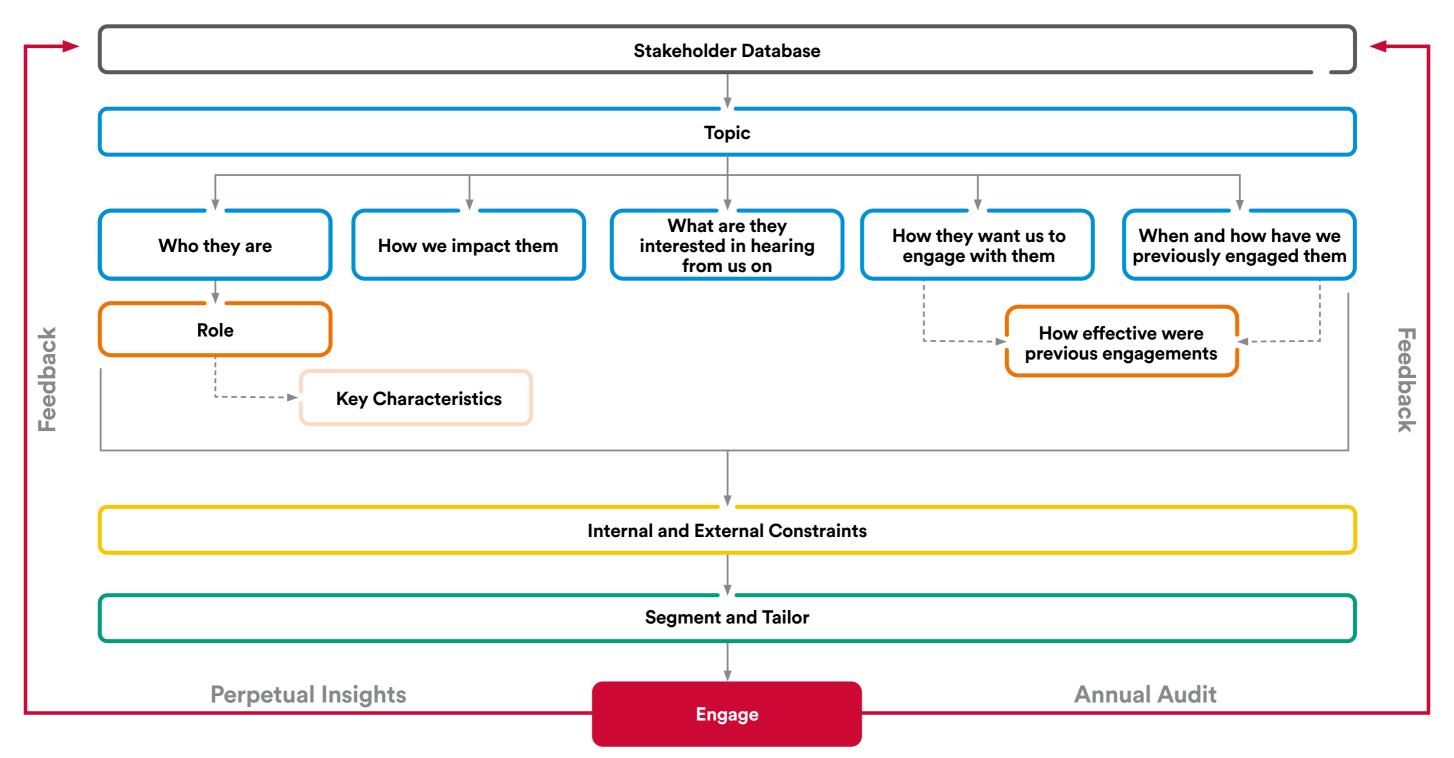








## **Understand and Adapt**







# **Engagement Optimisation**

Perpetually optimising our stakeholder engagement is critical to everything we do. The ongoing feedback and insights we gather are fundamental to our decision-making processes and our success as a business, and it keeps us accountable. It also ensures we can continue to adapt, innovate and improve as a business.

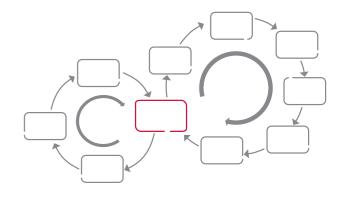
Our systematic approach ensures we learn and improve and execute high-quality and meaningful engagement in every activity we undertake:

- We define solid KPIs and objectives
  This means we're guided by a clear purpose
  and have specified benchmarks for success.
- We consider new, hard-to-reach or vulnerable stakeholders.
  We keep in mind and try to connect with everyone who might be impacted by us or we might feel the impact of.
- We manage identified risks and prepare well to handle challenges. This ensures we anticipate challenges and outcomes and can take appropriate remedial action to manage risk and ensure organisational resilience and agility.
- We report back on actions and outcomes from stakeholder feedback. This ensures we maintain an open dialogue with stakeholders and hold ourselves accountable to them by reporting back on the actions and outcomes delivered as a
- We hardwire stakeholder feedback into our decision-making.
   What we hear from our stakeholders is fundamental to our business processes and how we function.

result of our interaction.

- We are agile, transparent, and inclusive. This makes sure our engagement reflects changing behaviours. We must maintain those strong connections with stakeholders, no matter what kind of environment we're operating in. This also keeps us accountable for our processes, decisions, actions and outcomes especially as they relate to the issues our stakeholders care about. Lastly, this ensures we continue to expand our reach and connect with a diverse, meaningful group of stakeholders who are representative of the communities we serve.
- We create opportunities to improve and innovate.

We build in processes and testing that monitor and evaluate the ways in which we can improve our engagement. We bring in new concepts and ideas wherever we can, so that we can carry on raising the bar and optimising our engagement.



## **Engagement standards we follow**

We follow seven, simple standards



We define solid KPIs and objectives



We always consider new, hard to reach or vulnerable stakeholders



We manage identified risks and prepare well to handle challenges



We report back on actions and outcomes from stakeholders' feedback



We are agile, transparent, and inclusive



We create opportunities to improve and innovate



We hardwire stakeholder feedback into our decision making





## Stakeholder-Based Decision Making

Feedback and Analysis

Stakeholders are our best source of business intelligence. We believe that using their views as guidance for our business is fundamental to our success. We record and review all feedback in an accurate and timely manner.

## Actively listening and constantly mining insights from stakeholders helps us to:

- better understand stakeholders' needs,
- be accountable to stakeholders, and,
- identify existing and emerging trends.

Stakeholder feedback is segmented against carefully selected criteria.

Our centralised Stakeholder Feedback Reporting Dashboard enables us to capture, report and track all stakeholder feedback in a single place. This allows us to clearly track stakeholder satisfaction levels, identify the most effective and most popular engagement approaches, and review levels of engagement and gaps by both stakeholder type and geography. We can interrogate the data both by segment and by sub-characteristic, which uncovers detailed trends and insights across different groups of stakeholders. It also allows us to track engagement across seldom-heard and hard-to-reach groups and to record actions taken in response to stakeholder feedback.

### **Example:**

Segmentation	Sub-characteristics
Geographical	Sub-region, urban, suburban, rural
Demographic	Age, gender, socio economic, home tenure, ethnicity
Vulnerable	Health, social need, economic need, literacy
Behavioural	Digitally dis-enfranchised, time poor, early adopters low carbon technology
Business	Public or private sector, SME, large enterprise, demand profile
Political	Geography, interest areas, knowledge/awareness
Community	Geography, interest areas, knowledge/awareness

From the feedback we gather, we can derive robust, formal insights that can be woven into our decision-making process.

We make sure to 'close the loop' and let stakeholders know how their feedback has influenced our decisions and actions.



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## Stakeholder-Based Decision Making

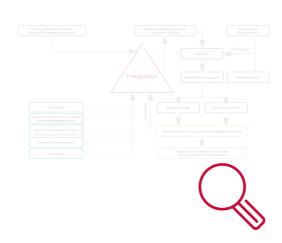
**Decision-Making and Action** 

### **Verification**

To make sure we're deriving smart, data-driven outcomes and actions in response to stakeholder feedback, that feedback is correlated with insights from other sources.

### These include

- Customer service and engagement teams
- BAU activity
- Insights from the regulator and government
- Internal and external research
- Best practice research

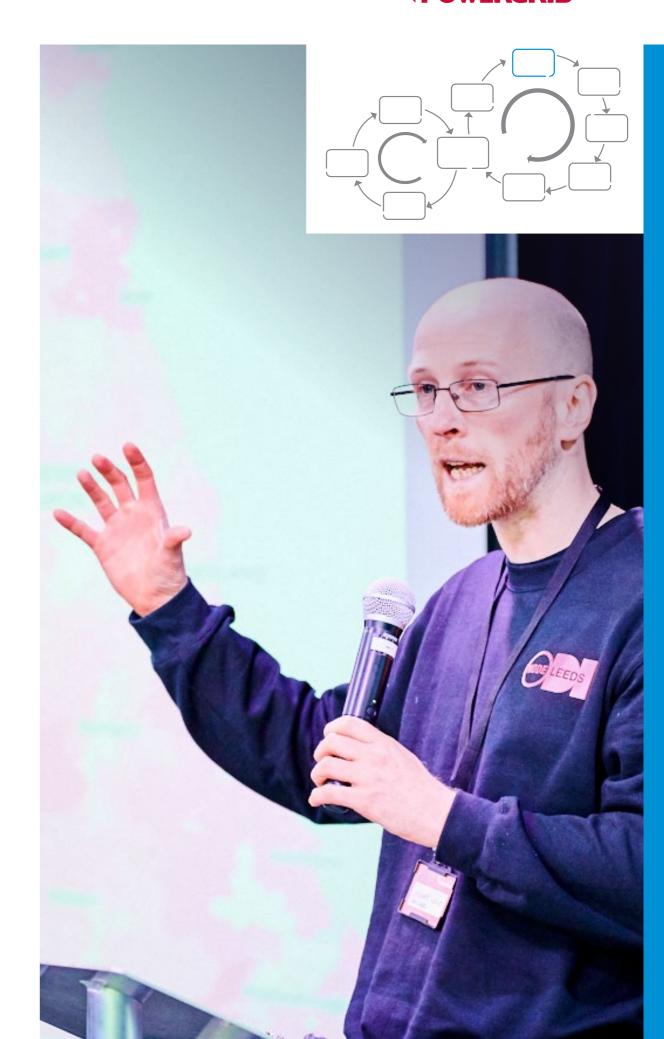




We put significant energy into gathering stakeholder insights in a structured way, so that everything we learn can be put to good use by the business. The next step is to pass the results of that work on to our Stakeholder Engagement Leads Management Group (ELMG).

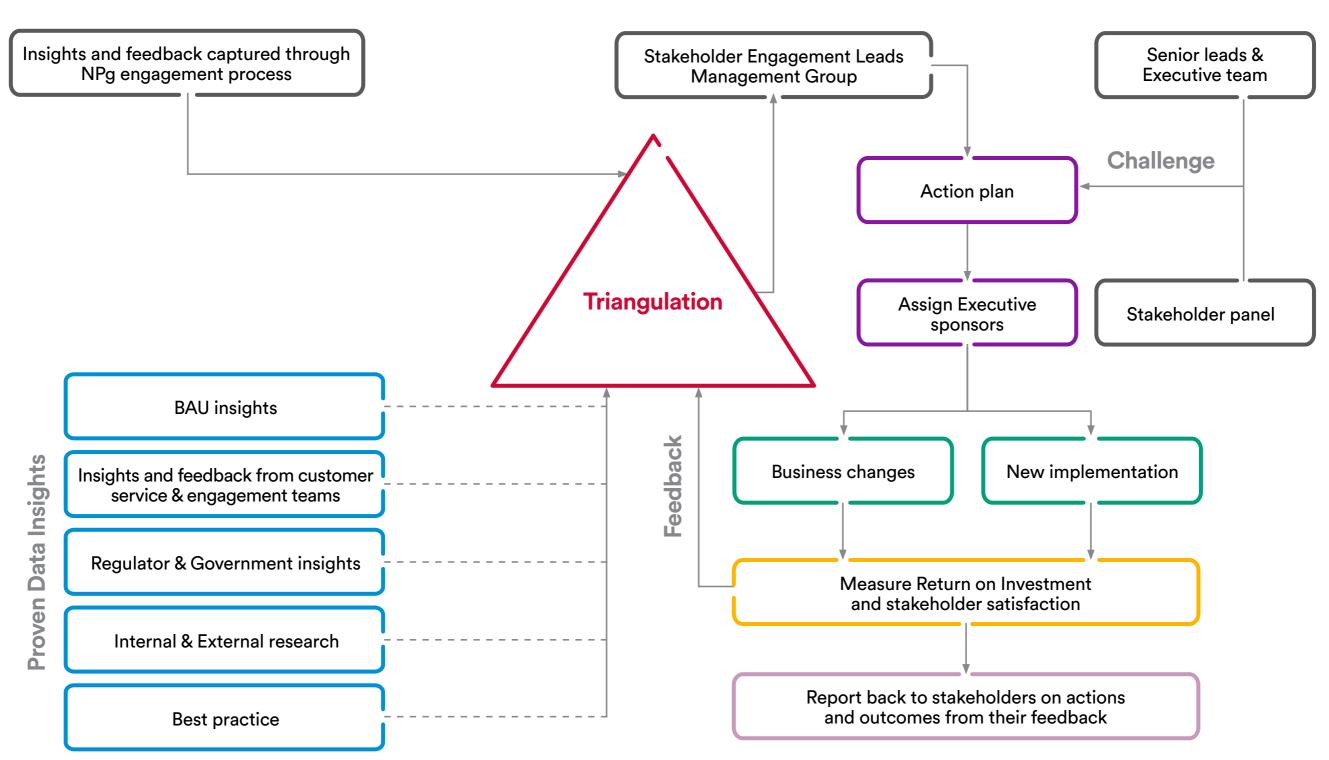
This group comprises experienced Senior Managers who can bring back primary challenges and express their views on the insights we've surfaced. The ELMG will prioritise any issues and then develop an action plan. In turn, that plan is then challenged by senior leads throughout the business, the Executive Team, and our Customer Engagement Group and Stakeholder Panels.

Each co-determined action is then assigned to an Executive Sponsor, who will then assign tasks to lead members of staff in their teams. Working this way means the responsibility for delivery is sitting across a cohort of invested individuals – but we also want to make sure that effort is returning the right results. For that reason, we also measure the Return on Investment from all of these actions, and the consequential levels of stakeholder satisfaction. We then report back to the stakeholders once more, letting them how their contributions helped in our decision-making.





## **Decision making process**



## Stakeholder-Based Decision Making

**Enabling transparent decision making** 

To ensure that our decision making is transparent and consistent we have key tools and processes in place to help the ELMG to assess and make key decisions based on stakeholder feedback.

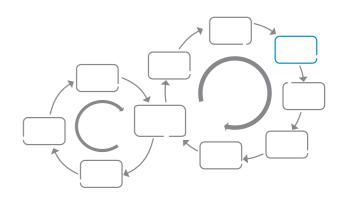
## Weighting methodology

Our Weighting methodology helps us to measure engagement and insight based on multiple factors. The approach helps us to plan engagement and is particularly useful where we have any tension or contradictory opinions between different stakeholder groups. While any decision will always have a human factor as well as considerations like cost/benefit, alignment to business values and other feasibility factors, this approach means that we can evaluate the strength of multiple pieces of feedback with consistency and integrity.

## **Project management**

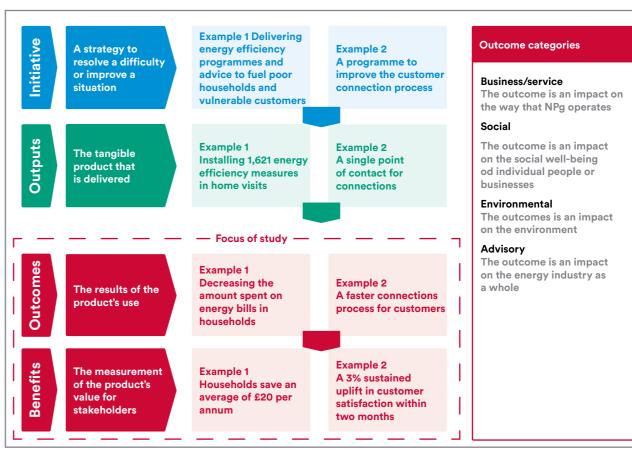
Effective project management requires us to continually review the positive impact of our work and examine whether we are able to continue delivering strong customer or stakeholder benefit and balance changing stakeholder needs, regulatory integrity and available resources.

Our approach identifies types of benefit and quantifies the result in monetary terms, giving us a way to fairly compare results across a range of initiatives that have a variety of measurable and non-measurable outcomes. This helps to inform future investment decisions and the overall success of projects in terms of stakeholder outcomes This process along with our regular reporting also helps us to manage and minimise any risks with clear check points to ensure that we are delivering value for money and that new projects/initiatives are realising or exceeding their objectives, outcomes and benefits.



Our Weighting	Weighting	Inputs	
Sample size	A sample size 'score' is calculated based on the respondents and the type of engagement	20%	Automatic
Representation -	A representation 'score' is calculated based on the number of stakeholders the participants represent	20%	Automatic
Influence	A score which measures the influence of the stakeholder in the study. This is derived from the stakeholder map	15%	Automatic
Impact	A score which measures our impact on stakeholders. This is derived from the stakeholder map	15%	Automatic
Relevance	A relevance 'score' which is input by the stakeholder as a measure of how relevant the engagement is to the overall business plan	15%	USER
Knowledge	A knowledge 'score' is input by the stakeholder and is a measure of how important stakeholder voice is to the topic being considered	15%	USER

## Our project management approach



## Stakeholder-Based Decision Making

**Measurable Progress** 

We must use measurement methodologies that let us quantify both financial and non-financial benefits for stakeholders, and the return on investment from our activities.

As an integrated part of this work, we commissioned Accent Research and PJM Economics to do an appraisal of our measurement methodology.

We asked them to compare it with perceived best practice, both within the utilities' sector and against wider industry models.

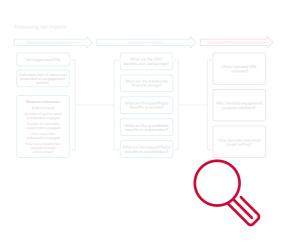
Using their assessments and working with two external partners – Impact Research and Sia Partners – we have developed a comprehensive way of measuring our engagement work's benefits.

The model we use comprises an extensive mix of quantification measures from respected sources and, where financial values aren't available, it uses research instead. Our model incorporates industry agreed proxies covering Housing, Fire, Quality of Life, Transport, Crime, Employment, Energy and Education to help with consistent measurement and benchmarking. It lets us define a piece of activity in terms of savings, value – financial or not – and social benefit.

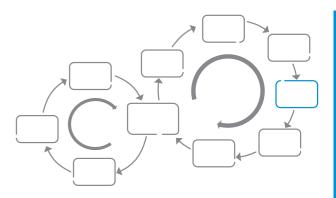
We measure activity costs and outcomes by setting targets and KPIs; assessing the costs expended; and then exploring and defining the impact and reach. At that point, we can then calculate a monetization of any resulting benefits. We take savings into consideration, and not only the quantifiable benefits but also the unquantifiable benefits – the outcomes that are intrinsically harder to correlate with a monetary value.

These assessments are held up as a mirror to the KPIs, targets and desired outcomes we set in advance, giving us a reflection of the work done and its value to our business.

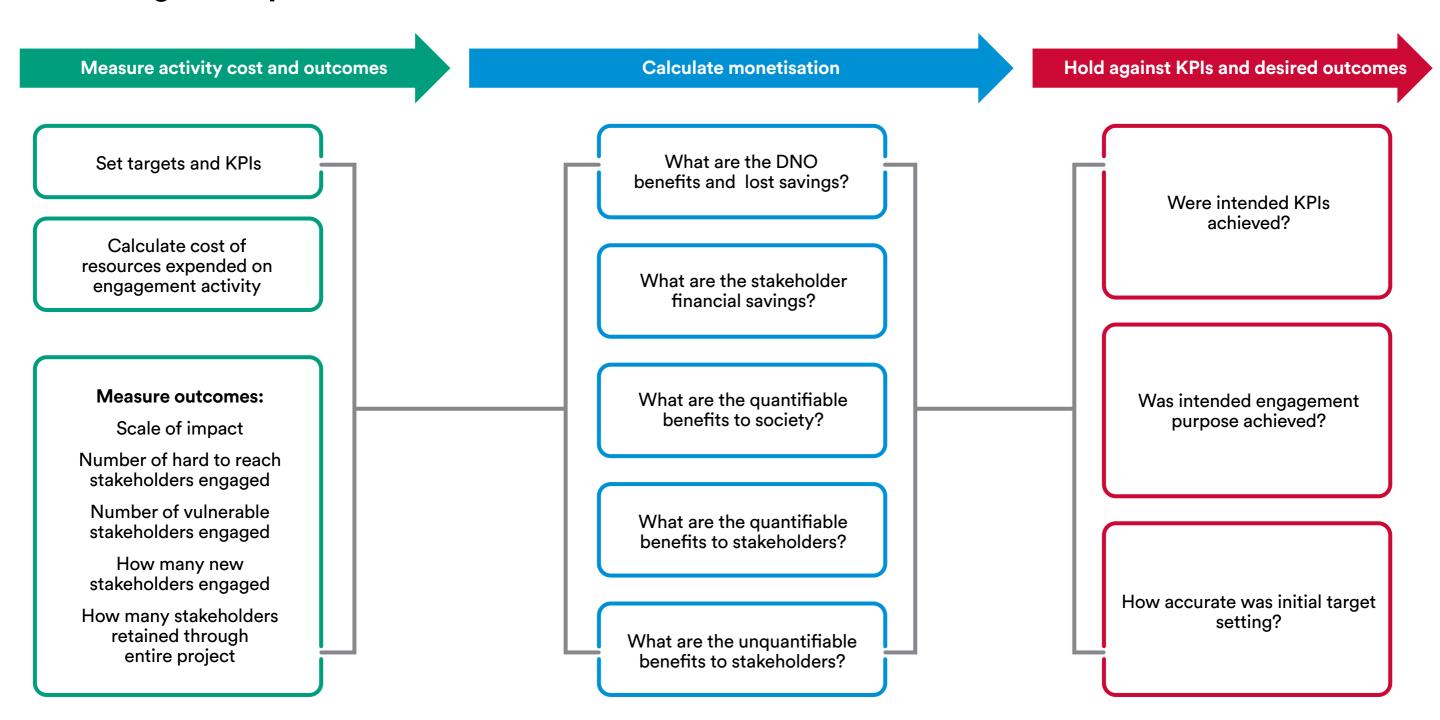








## Measuring our impact



## Stakeholder-Based Decision Making

Learning and Refining

As our business evolves, we promote and embed a cycle of continuous improvement in our stakeholder engagement activity. We learn from and refine our processes, constantly. In so doing, we can also be sure of enhancing our engagement effectiveness and stakeholder relationships.

We review the quality of each piece of engagement activity, its outcomes, and the feedback that result, and we scrutinize each learning against a robust set of variables:

- Reach.
- Were we engaging with the right people, the right way? Did we connect with hard-to-reach and/ or vulnerable individuals and did we hear from new voices?
- Depth of responses.
  Did we get the high-quality responses we wanted?
- Agility of execution.
  Was it appropriate for a rapidly changing environment?
- Cost.

What were the financial, time and resource costs involved?

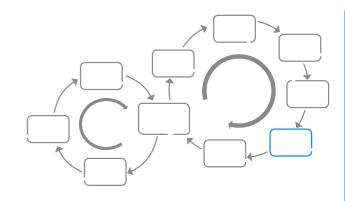
Outcomes.

What were the insights learned, changes for the business and changes for stakeholders, too?

- ROI.
  What was the ROI?
- Risk.

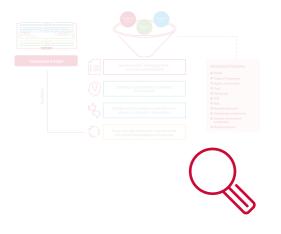
What were the known risks? Did any new ones arise?

- Benefits delivered.
  What were they?
- Stakeholder satisfaction. What was the measured stakeholder satisfaction of the engagement and resulting actions?
- Satisfaction levels. Are internal and external stakeholders satisfied with the engagement and outcomes?
- Business impact. How did this activity, feedback and actions or outcomes impact our business?



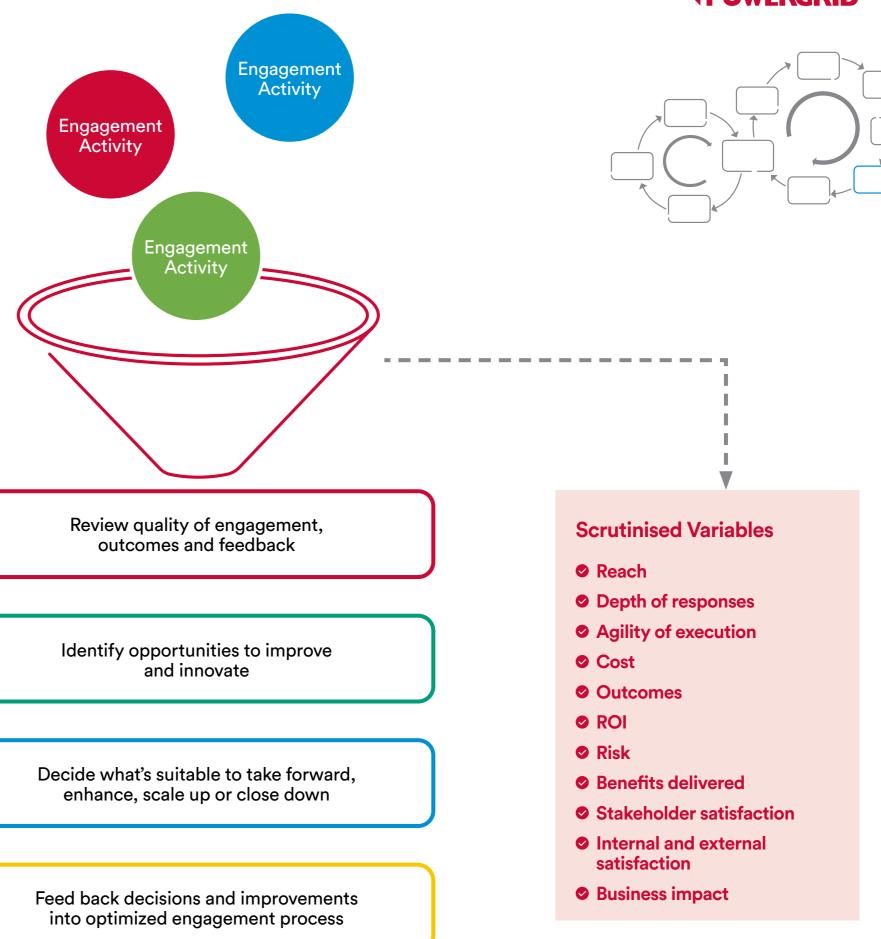
This rigorous review lets us see opportunities to improve our process, and it helps us identify where and how we can innovate or test new methods of engagement. We can then decide what the next steps are – which activities are suitable to take forward, enhance, scale up or close down.

Finally, we cross-check these findings with insights from the Understand and Adapt phase and roll any changes into our methodology. The result is a continuously improving cycle of engagement activity.

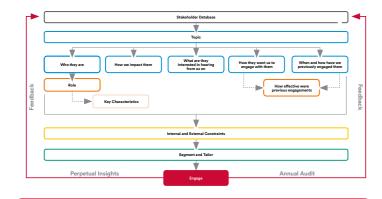








## **Learning and Refining process**



**Understand & Adapt** 











## Stakeholder-Based Decision Making

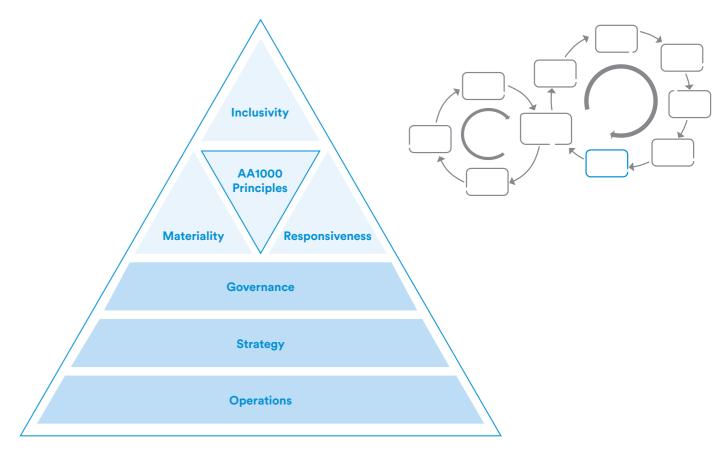
Assurance and benchmarking

Doing the right thing for stakeholders means continually monitoring our progress. Annually we commit to assurance processes which assesses our engagement and related activities; ensuring that we are moving in the right direction. Ultimately the real value lies in the recommendations made, which help us to continually improve.

Our assurance includes:

- Annual independent assurance against The AA1000 AccountAbility Stakeholder Engagement Standard (2015) – the most widely applied stakeholder engagement standard which establishes the global benchmark for conducting high-quality stakeholder engagement projects and programs. We have successfully achieved the standard since 2012.
- Annual independent ISO55000 Accreditation including assessment of our stakeholder engagement strategy.
- Our own internal, board approved review of our stakeholder strategy and stakeholder engagement methodology.





AA1000 Stakeholder engagement principles









# Governance and Accountability

We believe in strong governance, accountability and clear reporting. Everything we do must be transparent and robust – it's how we make sure we're promoting informed decision-making and maintaining our stakeholder-led approach.

Mature, expert panels provide input, insight and challenge to our work. Acting as critical friends, they challenge our work, ensuring we imagine what it's like to be in our stakeholders' shoes. The constant exchange of insights and feedback across our robust governance network keeps us accountable to our internal and external stakeholders.

We report annually on our stakeholder commitments to ensure openness and transparency; publishing our progress and future plans.

## For each group involved in our governance, the following illustrates:

- What their role is,
- Who they are communicating with,
- How they communicate, and,
- When they communicate, as a minimum threshold of frequency.





Group	What	Who	How	When
Engagement Leads Management Group	Senior managers from across the business who are responsible for engagement oversight. The main function of the group is to plan and execute engagement activity to deliver the stakeholder	Overall stakeholder engagement process	Engagement process oversight and role in Decision Making & Action	Monthly
	strategy, respond and act on the feedback we receive as a result of engagement, and escalate issues where necessary to the Executive.	Social Responsibility Engagement Management Group	Written reports	Monthly
		Customer Engagement Group and Stakeholder Panels	Written reports	Monthly
		CEO/Exec Board	Written reports	Monthly
Social Responsibility Engagement Management	Managers from across the business who are responsible for supporting vulnerable stakeholders, delivering innovative solutions to affordability challenges and strengthening the communities we serve through education.	Overall stakeholder engagement process and actions	Engagement process oversight and role in Decision Making & Action	Monthly
Group		Engagement Leads Management Group	Written reports	Monthly
CEO/Exec Board	Ensures engagement activity, feedback and our actions are planned, executed, measured and responded on and that ultimately what our	Engagement Leads Management Group	Written reports	Monthly
	stakeholders want is helping to shape and influence our business and the services we deliver. The executive receives a monthly stakeholder engagement report and in addition can request reporting on any or all aspects of stakeholder activity, feedback and	Full Board	Written reports	Quarterly
		Stakeholders	Annual Stakeholder Summit	Annually
	our actions in our response at any time.	Stakeholders	Annual Stakeholder Report	Annually
Full Board	Responsible for Governance and holding the Exec Board to account.	CEO/Exec Board	Response to written reports	Quarterly
Engagement I Group	Independently scrutinises and challenges Northern Powergrid's business plan, the quality of engagement undertaken to inform	Stakeholders	Website and newsletter	Quarterly
	it and helps to ensure that customers' needs and preferences are reflected.	Engagement Leads Management Group	Response to written reports	Quarterly
Stakeholder and Customer Panels	Seperate panels of Rural, Future, Domestic, SME and Community Energy customers and our Stakeholder Panel of 40+ representative	Stakeholders and Customers	Website and newsletter	Monthly
	stakeholders.	Engagement Leads Management Group	Response to written reports	Quarterly



## **Governance process**

