



ENERGY
INNOVATION
CENTRE

INDUSTRY INNOVATOR ACTION PLAN

EIC Partnership and industry response to stakeholder feedback

EIC Partnership



nationalgrid



Key Expected Contributors



INTRODUCTION

For over 16 years, the Energy Innovation Centre (EIC) has championed innovation in the UK energy sector, bringing together over 10,000 innovators to solve critical challenges and deliver meaningful change. Through targeted calls for innovation, project support and expert guidance, we've helped translate groundbreaking ideas into solutions that enhance energy networks and deliver benefits to energy consumers.

Our commitment to improving the journey for innovators is unwavering. Since 2017, we have proactively sought feedback through Innovator Insight Surveys. These surveys, now a key part of our approach, provide invaluable insights into the challenges innovators face and guide our efforts to overcome them.

Our latest Action Plan builds on this foundation with a sharper focus on action. It introduces targeted initiatives to streamline innovation processes, strengthen collaboration and ensure new solutions progress faster and more efficiently from concept into business as usual (BAU). Key priorities include improving frameworks for the Network Innovation Allowance (NIA), Strategic Innovation Fund (SIF) and BAU funded innovation, whilst reducing duplication and aligning industry stakeholders around the needs of innovators.

The EIC is committed to fostering an innovation ecosystem where ideas flourish and the pace of innovation deployment accelerates. By addressing these challenges, we can ensure the energy sector supports and adopts transformative solutions to create a more sustainable and resilient future.





EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report identifies critical challenges and outlines targeted actions to accelerate energy network innovation in the UK. Developed in collaboration with innovators, networks and selected industry organisations, this plan calls for a coordinated effort to increase the pace of innovation, streamline processes, enhance industry coordination, improve consistency across networks, and strengthen collaborative working and partnerships.

SURVEY FINDINGS

The survey results align with previous feedback from Innovators, highlighting overall slow progress in improving collaboration and access to funding, with innovators reporting improved experience when working with the energy networks. However, barriers remain, particularly in ensuring consistency and accelerating the adoption of innovations into BAU. These findings reinforce the need for targeted actions to streamline innovation processes in order to drive progress.

ACTION PLAN

The Action Plan aims to deliver a more integrated and effective innovation ecosystem, reducing duplication, accelerating the adoption of new ideas and driving tangible progress in advancing energy innovation. We have developed 12 actions, which are organised into three work streams:

- Creating an effective innovator support ecosystem
- Streamlining innovation processes
- Accelerating deployment.

"Effective industry collaboration is key to accelerating innovation deployment and overcoming challenges in delivering a decarbonised energy system. We appreciate the ambition of this report and look forward to working with the EIC and other stakeholders to see how this will be put into action"

Luke Blackaby, Head of Innovation Hub – Ofgem

ACTION RECENTLY TAKEN IN RESPONSE TO PREVIOUS FEEDBACK



Enhanced 1-2-1 Support

Pitching & IP
Advice

New Innovation Deployment Guidance

A clear and comprehensive
overview of key BAU
readiness indicators

Updated Innovator Support Page

New Intellectual Property Guidance

Updated Innovation Procurement Guide

Introducing



Volta

Innovator Support AI Tool trained
on over 160 industry resources.

New Innovator Support Landscape

Discover a range of key resources and
support available to energy innovators in
the UK navigating from concept to
business-as-usual deployment.

Updated Ultimate Guide to Innovating with the UK Energy Networks

Updated Testing & Demonstration Map

Strengthened End to End Processes
To support the journey from idea to BAU Deployment

STATISTICS

Insight Survey Headlines

Responses

201

Comments and suggestions

1700

70% INCREASE

74%

Of respondents were SMEs

84%

Engaged or attempted to engage

62%

Submitted an idea

44%

Accessed funding (SIF or NIA)

Key Statistics

Satisfaction with the current level of industry support

45%
SATISFIED

Overall networks interaction

52%
SATISFIED

Development and deployment experience

80%
POSITIVE

Survey Sentiment and change since 2022

Enabler	Negative	Not Sure	Positive	Change
1 I have access to the necessary industry information and expertise to support the adoption of my innovation	16%	35%	49%	▲ 5%
2 I have relevant and timely access to funding information (in addition to NIA and SIF)	19%	44%	37%	▲ 5%
3 I recognise that the energy networks are now embracing disruptive innovations (e.g. higher risk potentially high benefits, a novel solution / method that differs significantly from current practice)	25%	35%	40%	▼ 3%
4 I recognise that the energy networks have improved their procurement process to accommodate small companies	19%	55%	26%	▲ 6%
5 I have sufficient clarity in relation to the energy networks general terms and conditions, including Intellectual Property Rights and insurance requirements	14%	30%	56%	▲ 17%
6 I am aware of testing and demonstration facilities available in the energy sector	31%	25%	44%	▲ 6%
7 I have sufficient clarity in relation to the challenges that the energy networks need to address	12%	25%	63%	▲ 11%
8 I have seen an improvement in the pace of engagement of innovation development and adoption	20%	43%	37%	▲ 5%
9 I have a greater clarity in the end-to-end requirements that will increase the likelihood of deployment of my innovation within a network of company	24%	39%	37%	▲ 8%

Number of Survey Respondents Who Have Interacted With a Network

UKPN	75
NGED	72
SSEN(D)	66
NPg	60
SPEN(D)	55
NGET	50
NGN	49
ENW	43
Cadent	41
SSEN(T)	41
SGN	39
WWU	38
NGas(T)	29
SPEN(T)	29
ESO	23
GNI	21
Other	4

SELECTED COMMENTS FROM THE INNOVATORS

"Engagement has been extremely professional and pleasurable on a personal level. In all, a most enjoyable experience over some 4-5 years now"

"The BAU process is very specific to individual Energy Operators. Some commonality and joint process would be appreciated"

"EIC Legal help at the beginning of the project and the writing of the DIA (contract) was invaluable"

"A hub which pulls together details of all available support would be very helpful with an opportunity to speak with and see presentations from each organisation"

"Procurement processes can be burdensome for smaller companies"

"Slow does not begin to describe it"

"Could really do with some support in avoiding the valley-of-death between funded innovation projects and BAU adoption / commercial engagement"

"Timings of SIFs discovery make little sense; placed over the densest period of bank holidays and now overlapping existing alphas. Cycle times for decisions from UKRI are also too long. PEA document for NIA project has too much repetition"

WORKSTREAMS AND ACTIONS

The workstreams and actions outline targeted initiatives shaped by insights from innovators. These actions aim to enhance support, accelerate deployment and streamline processes, fostering a more responsive and effective ecosystem for energy innovators across the UK.

WORKSTREAMS



CREATING AN EFFECTIVE
INNOVATOR SUPPORT
ECOSYSTEM



STREAMLINING
INNOVATION
PROCESSES



ACCELERATING
DEPLOYMENT

ACTIONS

Industry Commitment
to supporting
Innovators

Industry Innovator
Support Fast Triage
Process
(Priority Action)

Single Centralised
Platform for Support and
Industry Challenges
(Priority Action)

Consistent
Support
Signposting
for Innovators

Streamlining Innovation
Governance Processes
(Priority Action)

SIF
Improvements
(Priority Action)

Proactive
Innovator
Support

Standardising
Quality Feedback

Enhancing
Deployment
Readiness
(Priority Action)

BAU Transition
Support

Improving
Procurement
Guidance and
Simplifying Processes
(Priority Action)

Innovation Culture

FOCUSED ACTIONS

	Title	Action Detail	Network Lead	Key Expected Contributors
1	Industry commitment to supporting Innovators	The EIC, UKRI, ENA, FEN, ESC, and Ofgem will commit to working together to strengthen support and engagement with innovators and small businesses.	-	UKRI, ENA, FEN, ESC, Ofgem
2	Industry Innovator Support Fast Triage Process (Priority Action)	A quick support triage system will be set up to ensure innovators receive timely and consistent support across the industry. Innovators will register on an industry platform, and within three days, they'll be directed to the best organisation for their needs.		UKRI, ENA, FEN, ESC, Ofgem
3	Single Centralised Platform for Support and Industry Challenges (Priority Action)	The EIC website will serve as a single, user-friendly platform, providing UK energy innovators with easy access to resources, guidance and industry challenges to streamline their innovation journey.		UKRI, ENA, FEN, ESC, Ofgem, Networks
4	Consistent Support Signposting for Innovators	Networks and key industry organisations will consistently promote available support, resources, and guidance on their websites and platforms.		UKRI, ENA, FEN, ESC, Ofgem, Networks
5	Streamlining Innovation Governance Processes (Priority Action)	Networks will refine their governance processes to increase efficiency and accelerate the pace of innovation.	 	Networks, EIC
6	SIF Improvement (Priority Action)	These enhancements reflect ongoing efforts to refine the funding mechanism, ensuring it is more accessible, responsive, and effective in driving impactful innovation.	Led by UKRI	EIC, Ofgem, Selected Networks,
7	Proactive Innovator Support	Relevant resources, information and guidance will be made more visible and accessible by actively sharing them with innovators at key stages of their journey and enhancing one-to-one support.		UKRI, ENA, FEN, ESC, Ofgem, Networks
8	Standardising Quality Feedback	Clear guidance and best practice for feedback quality and response times will be established and shared across the industry to ensure greater consistency.		UKRI, ENA, FEN, ESC, Ofgem, Networks
9	Enhancing Deployment Readiness (Priority Action)	The BAU Readiness Framework will be refined and promoted for wider adoption across the industry, ensuring that all key elements are in place to accelerate the integration of innovation into BAU processes.		Networks, UKRI
10	BAU Transition Support	Further guidance and tailored support for innovators will be developed to facilitate BAU transitions. This will incorporate recent industry learnings and is likely to include 1-2-1 BAU support.		Networks, UKRI
11	Improving Procurement Guidance and Simplifying Processes (Priority Action)	Additional guidance will be created for innovators, reflecting new procurement regulations. Networks will collaborate to simplify and, where possible, harmonise procurement processes to make them more accessible.		Ofgem, Networks
12	<u>Innovation Culture</u>	Networks will strive to implement the seven actions outlined in the 'Innovation Culture "There's No Stopping You"' report with the aim of enhancing their innovation culture.	All Networks	Ofgem, UKRI

*EIC to oversee delivery of overall plan and lead selected actions in collaboration with network leads.



CONCLUSION

The energy sector has made meaningful progress in driving innovation, yet challenges remain. The Industry Innovator Action Plan directly addresses key barriers, including lack of industry coordination, slow adoption of innovation and fragmented processes. By refining processes and current funding mechanisms, the plan aims to reduce duplication, improve engagement, and create a more effective ecosystem for delivering innovation.

Driving innovation requires streamlined governance and the strategic use of existing expertise to ensure faster progress and greater access for innovators. The EIC Partnership remains committed to facilitating industry collaboration and aligning efforts to deliver net zero . By strengthening coordination and eliminating inefficiencies, we can enhance outcomes across the sector.

This plan is a call for collective action, urging all stakeholders to work together. With clear focus and united efforts, we can accelerate progress, deliver transformative change, and meet the evolving demands of the sector.

NEXT STEPS

Industry Commitment: Foster alignment among stakeholders to ensure a consistent, coordinated, and collaborative approach to supporting innovators and driving innovation across the industry.

Delivery: Execute targeted actions to achieve measurable impact across the three workstreams.

Progress Reporting: Regularly share updates on progress, highlighting successes and addressing ongoing challenges.





First Published: April 2025

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