

Industry Innovator Action Plan

Improving the journey from
innovation idea to adoption

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Ireland**

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Gas Networks**

Introduction

For over 18 years, the Energy Innovation Centre (EIC) has championed innovation in the UK energy sector, bringing together a global innovation community 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



Recent actions in response to previous feedback



Innovation Deployment Guidance: A clear and comprehensive overview of key BAU readiness indicators

Updated Innovator Support Page

Updated Ultimate Guide to Innovating with the UK Energy Networks

Updated Testing and Demonstration Map

Strengthened End-to-end processes to support the journey from idea to BAU deployment

Enhanced One-to-one support, including pitching and IP advice

New!

Quality Feedback Guidance

Intellectual Property Guidance

Innovator Support Landscape:

Discover a range of key resources and support available to energy innovators in the UK navigating from concept to BAU deployment

Introducing Volta: An Innovator Support AI Tool trained on over 160 industry resources

Statistics

200+
Responses

1700

Comments and Suggestions

74%

of respondents
were SMEs

84%

engaged or
attempted to

62%

submitted an
idea

44%

accessed
SIF/NIA funding



80%

Had a positive development and deployment experience

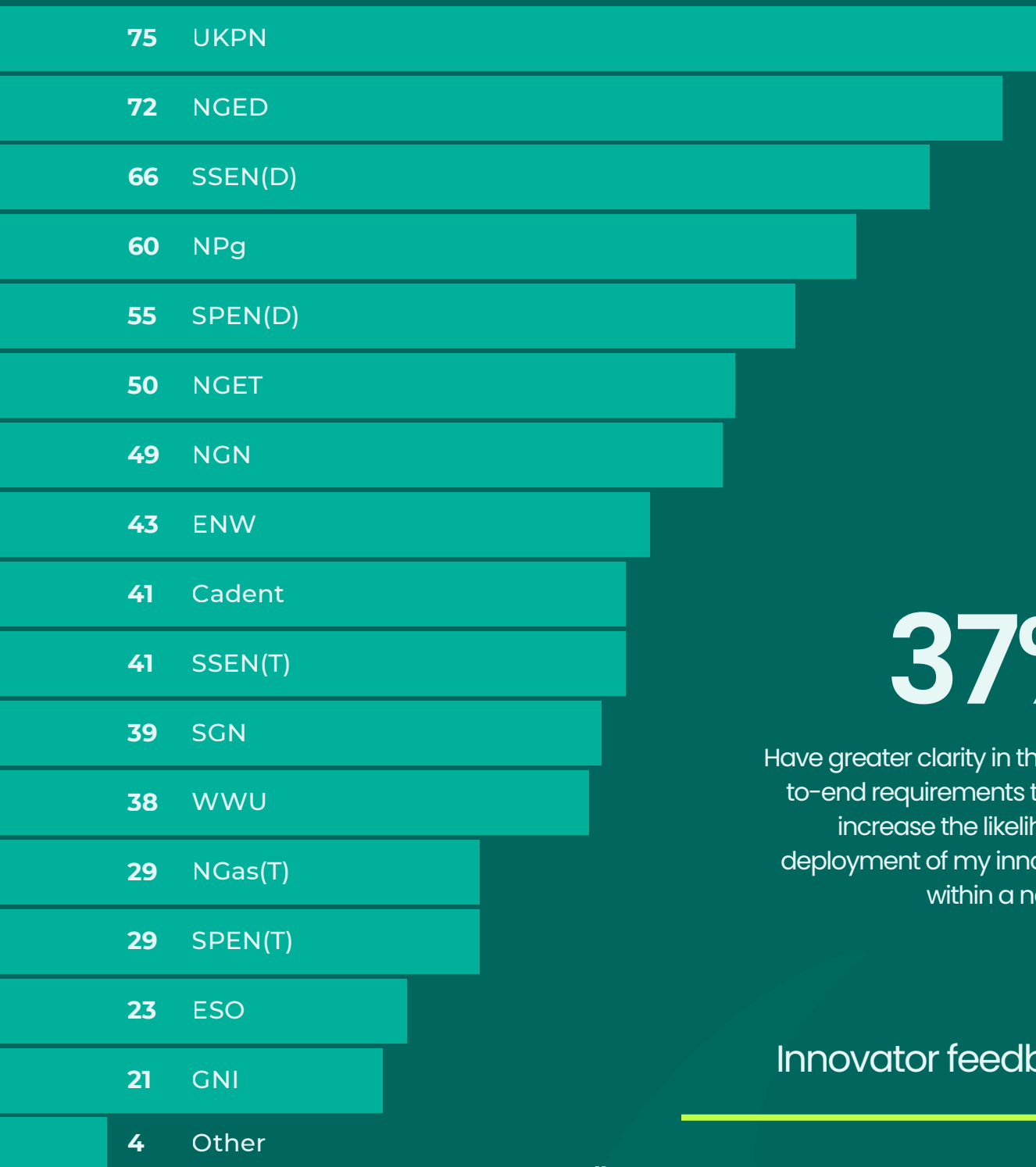
52%

Satisfied with overall networks interaction

45%

Satisfied with current level of industry support

Number of Survey Respondents Who Have Interacted With a Network



37%

Have greater clarity in the end-to-end requirements that will increase the likelihood of deployment of my innovation within a network

Innovator feedback:

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

26%

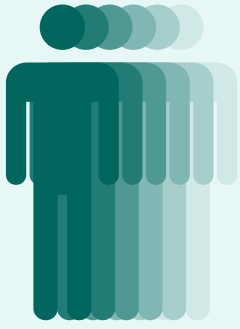
Recognise that the energy networks have improved their procurement process to accommodate small companies

Innovator feedback:

“Procurement processes can be burdensome for smaller companies”

37%

Have seen an improvement in the pace of engagement of innovation development and adoption



49%

Agree they have access to the necessary industry information and expertise to support the adoption of their innovation

63%

Feel they have sufficient clarity in relation to the challenges that the energy networks need to address

Innovator feedback:

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

40%

Recognise that the energy networks are now embracing disruptive innovations (eg higher risk potentially high benefits, a novel solution / method that differs significantly from current practice)

44%

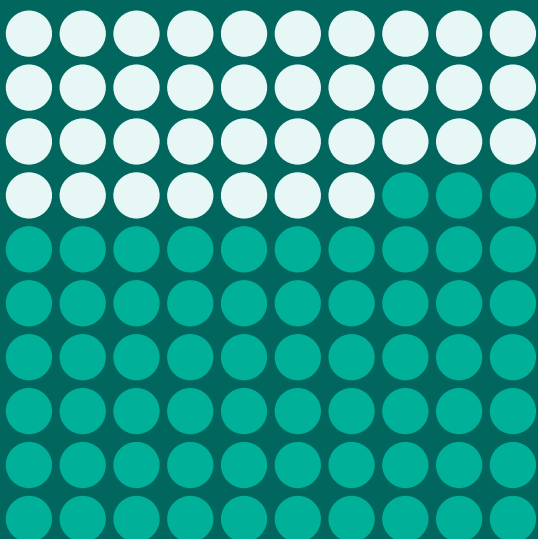
Are aware of testing and demonstration facilities available in the sector

Innovator feedback:

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

56%

Agree they have sufficient clarity in relation to the energy networks general terms and conditions, including intellectual property rights and insurance requirements




37%

Feel they have relevant and timely access to funding information (in addition to NIA and SIF)

Workstreams & 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.



Creating an effective innovator support ecosystem

Streamlining innovation processes

Accelerating deployment

Industry Commitment to Supporting Innovators

Streamlining Innovation Governance Processes

Enhancing Deployment Readiness

Priority Action

Priority Action

Industry Innovator Support Fast Triage Process

SIF Improvements

BAU Transition Support

Priority Action

Priority Action

Single Centralised Platform for Support & Industry Challenges

Proactive Innovator Support

Improving Procurement Guidance & Simplifying Processes

Priority Action

Priority Action

Consistent Support Signposting for Innovators

Standardising Quality Feedback

Innovation Culture

The 12 Focused Actions

01 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.

04 Consistent Support Signposting for Innovators

Networks and key industry organisations will consistently promote available support, resources and guidance on their websites and platforms.

Led by: Scottish & Southern Electricity Networks Transmission

*02 Industry Innovator Support Fast Triage Process

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.

Led by: National Grid

*05 Streamlining Innovation Governance Processes

Networks will refine their governance processes to increase efficiency and accelerate the pace of innovation.

Led by: UK Power Networks, Scottish & Southern Electricity Networks

*03 Single Centralised Platform for Support & Industry Challenges

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.

Led by: Northern Powergrid

*06 SIF Improvement

These enhancements reflect ongoing efforts to refine the funding mechanism, ensuring it's more accessible, responsive, and effective in driving impactful innovation.

Led by: UKRI

07 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.

Led by: SP Energy Networks

08 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.

Led by: Northern Gas Networks

*09 Enhancing Deployment Readiness

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.

Led by: UK Power Networks

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 one-to-one BAU support.

Led by: SP Energy Networks

*11 Improving Procurement Guidance and Simplifying Processes

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.

Led by: Northern Gas Networks

12 Innovation Culture

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.

Led by: All Networks

*EIC to oversee delivery of overall plan and lead selected actions in collaboration with network leads. Contributions are expected from the following organisations on selected actions: Ofgem, UKRI, ENA, FEN, ESC and other networks.

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.



The Energy Innovation Centre

The Technology Centre, Suites 1 and 2,
Inward Way, Ellesmere Port
Cheshire CH65 3EN

Tel 0151 348 8040 | enquiries@ukeic.com

