

**For the attention of Mr Steven McMahon, Deputy Director, Electricity Distribution
Network Price Controls and Cross Sector Policy**



Dear Mr McMahon,

As an important stakeholder to Electricity North West and the rest of the electricity distribution network operators, I am pleased to respond to your Open Letter consultation.

Rural England is a Community Interest Company. Our mission is to build the strength and resilience of rural England by helping to inform and engender better rural policy making.

In light of the energy system transition we believe it is imperative to ensure that rural customers are adequately considered. Potentially vulnerable rural consumers are much harder to identify than their urban counterparts and are likely to be underrepresented on Priority Services Registers. To engage with vulnerable rural residents there is an urgent need for close liaison with:

- health services, hospitals and local medical centres
- care providers
- local charities and not for profit organisations, especially those groups that are out in the community e.g. community transport groups, Macmillan nurses
- other local community organisations

The additional challenges associated with identifying, and engaging with, vulnerable customers in rural areas needs to be explicitly recognised.

In terms of the proposed customer engagement groups, we want to ensure that any engagement groups should avoid urban bias and ensure that rural and remote rural voices are also heard.

Finally, in terms of anticipatory investment, there are concerns that the capacity of rural grids will not facilitate the anticipated increase in electric vehicle ownership. Since vehicle ownership levels are higher in rural areas, and rural residents of necessity travel greater distances per annum, this is a serious matter.

Rural residents living off the mains gas grid are also likely to be hardest hit by other aspects of the de-carbonisation agenda particularly in relation to domestic heating.

Electricity grid capacity improvements for rural areas should therefore be an explicit national priority. Capacity could perhaps be supplemented by financial incentives to rural householders promoting domestic green energy generation.

Different areas of the country have different needs, and it is important that this is recognised and that networks are treated differently depending on their make-up. It is also important that

networks are funded fairly to deliver these vast improvements necessary so as not to delay the transition to a low carbon future, nor leave anyone behind.

Yours sincerely,

Jane Hart
Director
Rural England CIC

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