

NORTHERN POWERGRID AA1000 ACCOUNTABILITY PRINCIPLES STANDARD IDENTIFYING BEST PRACTICE

ISSUED – MARCH 2013

NATURE OF THE BUSINESS

Northern Powergrid is the electricity Distribution Network Operator for the Northeast of England and Yorkshire. It has approximately 40 sites and 2,500 employees and is responsible for delivering electricity safely and reliably to 3.9 million customers across northeast England, Yorkshire and northern Lincolnshire.

ASSESSMENT SERVICES

SGS has provided the following services to Northern Powergrid:

- Evaluated and verified its stakeholder engagement activities using the AA1000 Accountability Principles Standard (2008) and Ofgem criteria;
- Opinions on processes evaluated and stakeholder engagement activities, taking into consideration guidance on stakeholder engagement contained within the AA1000 Stakeholder Engagement Standard (2011);
- An internal management report based on the findings of the gap analysis highlighting strengths and weaknesses in processes and procedures identified.

OBJECTIVES

The objectives of the project were to provide constructive comments on current processes for stakeholder engagement. Improvement opportunities were identified to ensure that the requirements of Ofgem and the AA1000 Accountability Principles Standard were being adhered to by Northern Powergrid in their stakeholder engagement activities.

SIGNIFICANT BENEFITS

We provided detailed commentary on each element of the AA1000 Accountability Principles Standard and Ofgem criteria, identifying gaps and good practice and enabling Northern Powergrid to improve their stakeholder engagement programme and be a leader in the field by ensuring that implementation is consistent and ongoing in the future.

PROJECT APPROACH - ACHIEVING BEST PRACTICE

The gap analysis was an initial evaluation of Northern Powergrid's stakeholder engagement. The evaluation was performed and evidence collected through interviews and discussions with the team responsible for stakeholder engagement, senior management as well as reviews of relevant process documents, such as the stakeholder strategy, and evidence related to specific stakeholder engagement activities.



The AA1000 Accountability Principles, Inclusivity, Materiality and Responsiveness were matched up to relevant Ofgem criteria to enable an efficient evaluation process to be undertaken and provide feedback on performance in relation to both sets of criteria.

The management report provided a detailed description of the criteria and performance, identifying both the areas where improvements could be made as well as areas where good practice was being demonstrated.

Siobhan Barton, Stakeholder and Communications Manager at Northern Powergrid, stated: "Listening and responding to the views of our customers and wider stakeholders is essential to the delivery of the services we deliver now and in the future. We are striving to be a leader in the field of stakeholder engagement and working with SGS to achieve the AA1000SES standard is an essential component to this. The gap analysis was a helpful exercise in identifying where we were strong, in terms of improvement initiatives and the use of video, but the real added value has been the constructive feedback from SGS on what we are currently doing and where we need to focus our attention, particularly around processes. As experts in the field SGS are well positioned not only to assess but also to advise on best practice in the field which has made our goals feel achievable far sooner than we would have hoped."

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