NORTHERN POWERGRID Foundation





Our Strategy 2026–2028

Helping communities turn energy challenges into opportunities





Charity Registration Number: **1203185**

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Our Strategy

Introduction

We are Northern Powergrid Foundation; we are proud to be a grant-making charity, supporting communities in the North East, Yorkshire, and northern Lincolnshire with their energy-related challenges.

We know that energy is required across all areas of modern life, from how we keep warm, to how we connect with other people. But we also know that not everyone has the same relationship with energy, with many struggling to understand, manage, and benefit from the changes in the energy sector in recent years.

There are many reasons why individuals, and communities, may struggle in this space. We've provided funding to support those communities at risk because of where they live, helping organisations to develop warm and safe spaces in rural communities for people to gather in emergencies. But other challenges might include language barriers, health issues, and even affordability issues. Without support, these communities are at risk of being left behind as the sector changes, at risk of struggling to pay for the energy they need even more than they do now, and at risk of missing out on economic and social benefits that other communities can access.

We have listened to what our communities are telling us and have realised there are many gaps in support which we might be able to help with. We believe we have a role to support, educate, and guide the communities most-in-need, to ensure they can benefit from the changes in the sector, and access the energy they need, now and in the future. This strategy has been developed to help reach more of our communities facing these challenges, and to work with them to overcome these. To do this, we will:

- Develop funding options for communities who need to increase their resilience, and take ownership of their energy use;
- Identify the areas with limited community facilities, and provide them with funding and support to develop the spaces they need to support their residents;
- Help local organisations offering vital support services to their communities, to keep their lights on, their spaces warm, and their service-users supported;
- Engage and educate our communities to better understand their energy needs and usage, and to develop robust community resilience plans.

We are Northern Powergrid Foundation, and we exist to ensure our communities have the power they need to thrive.



Foreword

I am delighted to share Northern Powergrid Foundation's new strategy – a commitment to working alongside our communities to turn energy challenges into opportunities.

The way we generate, use, and share energy is changing rapidly, and with that change comes both uncertainty and possibility. Our role is to ensure that every community has the support it needs to thrive in an ever-changing energy future.

Our mission – **helping communities turn energy challenges into opportunities** – is at the heart of everything we do. This strategy sets out how we will deliver on that promise through three strategic priorities:

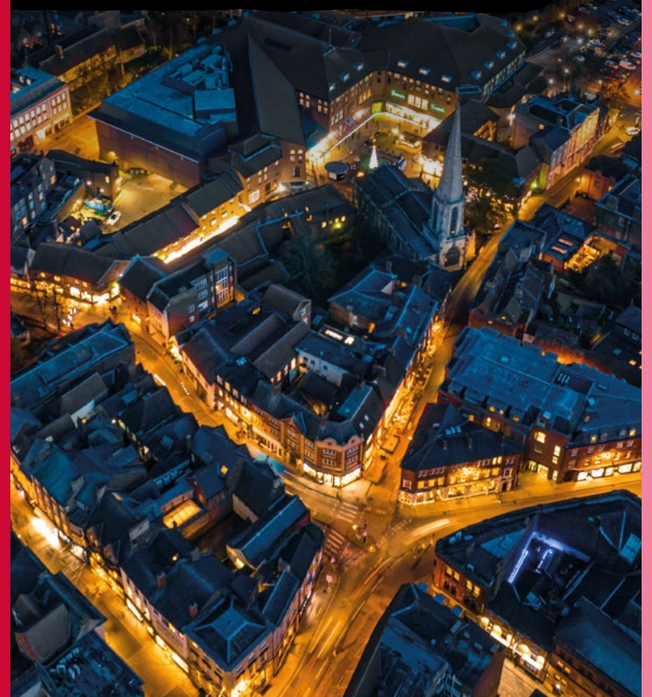
- **Enhancing resilience** – helping communities prepare for and respond to the impacts of a changing energy system, so they can stay strong and connected when it matters most.
- **Creating opportunities** – providing the support needed for communities to find and deliver the solutions that work for their individual needs.
- **Overcoming barriers** – supporting grass-roots community organisations to address the challenges placing their services at risk, helping them keep their lights on and their doors open.

These priorities reflect what we have heard from the communities we serve: that resilience, opportunity, and fairness are essential for a just energy transition. By focusing on these priorities, we aim to make a real and lasting difference – not just in how energy is used, but in how it empowers people and places.

Thank you to everyone who has helped shape this strategy. Together, we can transform challenges into opportunities and build a future where every community is stronger, more sustainable, and ready for what's ahead.



Joe Docherty
Lord Docherty of Milngavie
Chair of the Board of Trustees



Foreword

Leading an organisation with the power to transform lives across our region is both a privilege and a responsibility.

Energy touches every aspect of our daily lives, and as the landscape evolves, so too must our commitment to the communities we serve. I joined Northern Powergrid Foundation to make a difference – to work alongside the people of the North East, Yorkshire, and northern Lincolnshire to create opportunities and deliver meaningful change.

Since our inception three years ago, in the wake of Storm Arwen, we have focused on building resilience for communities at risk of long power cuts and extreme weather.

We've supported over 100 organisations to create safe, warm spaces and strengthen local resilience. That work matters – but it's only the beginning.

Today, new challenges demand more from us. The energy crisis has seen millions of households and charities across the UK struggle with the cost of energy, with many falling into the depths of fuel poverty, and we have significant pockets of this in our region. And the transition to cleaner energy, while essential, risks leaving vulnerable communities behind.

We feel it is right to do what we can to support those affected by these challenges, and our team brings the passion, skills, and knowledge to help make that much-needed difference.

This strategy – the first for Northern Powergrid Foundation builds on our strong foundations and sets out a bold vision: **to live in a world where our communities have the power they need to thrive.** Together, we will support our communities to build the resilience they need, to overcome the barriers they face, and to embrace the opportunities that are created by a changing energy landscape.



Jess Cook
Head of Northern Powergrid Foundation





Regional and sector trends

Our region covers a wide mix of places – from big cities and busy ports to small towns, coastal areas, and countryside across the North East, Yorkshire, and northern Lincolnshire.

People here have different needs and experiences with energy. These depend on things like the type and age of their homes, whether they rent or own, how isolated they are, and how much money they have. When energy prices suddenly rise or other outside pressures hit, people in our region often struggle more than others in the UK to cope or speak up for themselves.

Local charities are under pressure too. More people need their help, but they're facing rising costs and less funding. In the North East, 81% of small charities earn less than £100,000 a year[1], and our region receives the smallest share of charity income in England and Wales. In fact, 85% of all charitable income in England and Wales goes to just 4% of registered charities[2]. The Charity Commission notes that "42.6% of charities reported expenditure that exceeded income in their 2023 Annual Return, up from 38.3% in 2022... the 2023 data continues a general trend of a steadily increasing number of in-year deficits that we have seen in the last five years, with charities drawing from reserves to bridge the gap"[3].

This strategy aims to address some of these significant challenges facing the people, communities, and organisations in our region.

"Community-based, grassroots charities are effective changemakers who address the root causes of poverty on a daily basis. They are the 'glue' that binds together communities across the country, able to support people facing the most complex and overlapping barriers to opportunity.

Yet, due to their size and their focus on delivery these small organisations are consistently unseen , underfunded, and their impact unrecognised."

The Centre for Social Justice Foundation, "Overlooked and Underfunded", May 2024

[1]North East | Small Charities Data
[2]Underfunded and Overlooked, The Centre for Social Justice Foundation.
[3]Charity Sector Risk Assessment 2025 – GOV.UK, Charity Commission

NORTHERN POWERGRID Foundation

Our Strategy

Our vision

A world where our communities have the power they need to thrive

Our mission

Helping communities turn energy challenges into opportunities

Our strategic priorities

- **Enhancing Resilience**
- **Creating Opportunities**
- **Overcoming Barriers**

How we'll enhance our impact

- **Education and Training**
- **Partnerships**
- **Advocacy**
- **Volunteering**

Our organisational values

- **We are *Purposeful***
- **We are *Accountable***
- **We are *Honest***
- **We are *Inclusive***
- **We are *Respectful***



32.3%

The North East has the highest rate of free school meal eligibility (32.3%), with Yorkshire and Humber close behind (27.8%). Nearly 17% of our local areas are among the most deprived in England.

140

140 rural areas in our region are among the most deprived in the country.

Our Strategic Priorities

Our three new strategic priorities will allow us to support more communities in our region, with a wider range of challenges, and give us the flexibility to address new challenges as they arise.

Across all three strategic priorities, we will focus on communities most in need. We define this as those who sit in the 30% most income deprived areas of the country (based on Indices of Multiple Deprivation data), and/or those facing challenges due to where they are geographically located.

80%

A recent survey by the Charities Aid Foundation found that 80% of charities expect to struggle with rising energy costs, and 35% fear they might not survive.

81%

In the North East, 81% of small charities earn less than £100,000 a year, and our region receives the smallest share of charity income in England and Wales.



Strategic Priority:
Enhancing Resilience

Extreme weather events are becoming more common in the UK, with stronger winds, heat, and snow causing disruption in many areas, including potentially causing longer power cuts – especially in rural parts of the network. Some communities are at risk of being without electricity for several days.

Our Foundation was set up to help address this problem. We've funded rural communities to upgrade village halls and community centres, making them warm, safe places with backup energy sources. These spaces can open during emergencies and continue offering clubs, activities, and support that help tackle issues like loneliness. But many of these buildings are old and inefficient.

They lose heat through walls, roofs, and windows, driving up energy bills that some communities can't afford.

This puts vital services at risk of closing, especially in deprived areas where support is already limited. We believe these spaces shouldn't disappear just because of rising energy costs.

What is energy resilience?

An energy-resilient community is ready for whatever happens, today and tomorrow. It has a plan to keep people safe during emergencies, like storms or power cuts. It also works smart to save energy, use it wisely, and prepare for future changes.

What do we hope to achieve?

We want to support more communities in need – helping them become more energy resilient, feel confident their services can run during emergencies, and improve the buildings they use so those services are more sustainable. Our resilience grants will focus on the communities that need them most, whether that's because of where they're located or the level of poverty in the area. While our support is just one part of the solution, we believe it can help:

- Make communities safer and more sustainable
- Reduce social isolation
- Increase access to warm spaces
- Improve emergency preparedness
- Keep vital local services running.

What we'll do

- We'll target our support to communities most in need – especially those at risk of long power cuts or struggling financially.
- We'll expand our resilience grants to include energy-saving measures for organisations at risk of closing due to high costs.
- We'll work with partners with shared ambitions, to make our funding go further, reach more people, and deliver impact faster.

Strategic Priority:

Creating Opportunities

Across our region, people live in very different circumstances. We have some of the highest levels of economic inactivity in the UK. The North East has the highest rate of free school meal eligibility (32.3%), with Yorkshire and Humber close behind (27.8%)[4]. Nearly 17% of our local areas are among the most deprived in England.

In urban areas like Middlesbrough, Hull, and Bradford, many neighbourhoods face serious income challenges. These places also show big gaps between the richest and poorest areas within the same town or city.

Rural communities face different challenges, poor access to services, fewer job opportunities, and weak digital connections. Poverty can be harder to spot in rural areas because people live further apart, yet nearly 140 rural areas in our region are among the most deprived in the country. These places are often overlooked when support is given out, and so local solutions are essential.

These solutions are usually delivered by grassroots charities or community groups, but limited time, funding, and, sometimes, expertise often restrict what they can achieve.

What do we hope to achieve?

We want to give communities the opportunity to find and deliver the solutions they need. We know this isn't one size fits all, and so we'll develop funding programmes which can adapt as required, led by each community's needs. We'll listen to what they need and offer more than just money – we'll also provide hands-on help and expert advice to overcome challenges and build meaningful community solutions.

By doing this, we aim to:

- Boost pride in communities that need it most
- Help community spaces run sustainably
- Tackle local challenges by creating places where support and solutions can grow
- Support the early-stage development of solutions which could be scaled up for greater impact.

What we'll do

- We'll develop a funding programme for the refurbishment or development of under-utilised community spaces in areas of need.
- We'll bring together a wide range of volunteers to support communities in need, using our collective knowledge and expertise to help communities develop plans that can make a real difference.
- We'll explore how our funding can support the early-stage development of innovative ideas and community energy projects which deliver a range of community benefits.

32.3%
The North East has the highest rate of free school meal eligibility

17%
of our local areas are among the most deprived in England

[4]Schools, pupils and their characteristics, Academic year 2024/25 – Explore education statistics – GOV.UK

Strategic Priority:

Overcoming Barriers

Small charities in our region are under pressure. Rising energy bills, fewer donations (partly due to the cost-of-living crisis), and extra costs like National Insurance increases are making it harder for them to survive.

More people are turning to charities for help. Last year, 9% of people received food, medical, or financial support from charities – up from just 3% five years ago[5].

Many charities are struggling to cope. Some have cut services, others are using up their savings, and many have had to close.

We know how important local charities are – and how hard it is for them to meet growing demand. A recent survey by the Charities Aid Foundation[6] found that 80% of charities expect to struggle with rising energy costs, and 35% fear they might not survive.

We want to help these small but vital services stay open for the long term.

What do we hope to achieve?

We want local support services to keep helping their communities for as long as possible. We'll help them understand and manage their energy use so they can run more efficiently.

By doing this, we aim to:

- Give communities confidence that their local support will be there when they need it.
- Help organisations reach and support more people.
- Listen to what community groups are facing and work with them to find practical solutions.

What we'll do

- We'll find where support is missing and develop funding offers to fill those gaps.
- We'll offer multi-year funding to organisations struggling with short-term financial uncertainty.
- We'll focus on long-term solutions, helping organisations create and follow plans to manage their energy costs in a sustainable way.

9%
of people received food, medical, or financial support from charities

80%
of charities expect to struggle with rising energy costs



[5]Charities supporting three times as many people with essential aid, research finds, as sector faces increased financial pressure – GOV.UK
[6]The cost of living crisis and the impact on UK charities – Charity Link

How we'll enhance our impact

The funding landscape is changing. Many charities are seeing more demand but have less money to give. And sometimes, funding alone isn't what a charity really needs – or it's not enough.

Many of the groups we support are very small, often run entirely by volunteers. They don't have expert staff to manage day-to-day operations or deliver funded projects, and they usually can't afford outside help. Funding is the main way we support communities, but it's not the only way – we're here to help in other ways too:

Education and Training
We'll help raise awareness of the changes to the energy sector, and the opportunities they present to people living and working in our region. We'll deliver training and support to help communities help themselves – meaning even if we aren't able to fund them, organisations can learn how to build resilience in their community.

Partnership
We'll work in partnership with a range of organisations across our region, to help expand our reach and increase the impact of our services.

Advocacy
We'll listen to our communities, learn from what they tell us, and ensure that their voice is heard by those who can influence positive change.

Volunteering
We'll develop a new way for Northern Powergrid colleagues to make a difference to impactful organisations in our region, matching their skills and expertise to business needs.



NORTHERN POWERGRID Foundation

Our Values

We are Purposeful
We give our all in all that we do. Our purpose frames our delivery and ensures we remain motivated and impactful for our beneficiaries.

We are Accountable
We hold ourselves to the highest standards, owning the relationships we have with our stakeholders, and being proud of the service we provide.

We are Honest
We pride ourselves in being open and transparent in all we do, ensuring our decision-making is fair and meaningful.

We are Inclusive
We recognise and embrace our differences, learning from each other and others around us to find new and improved ways to conduct our business.

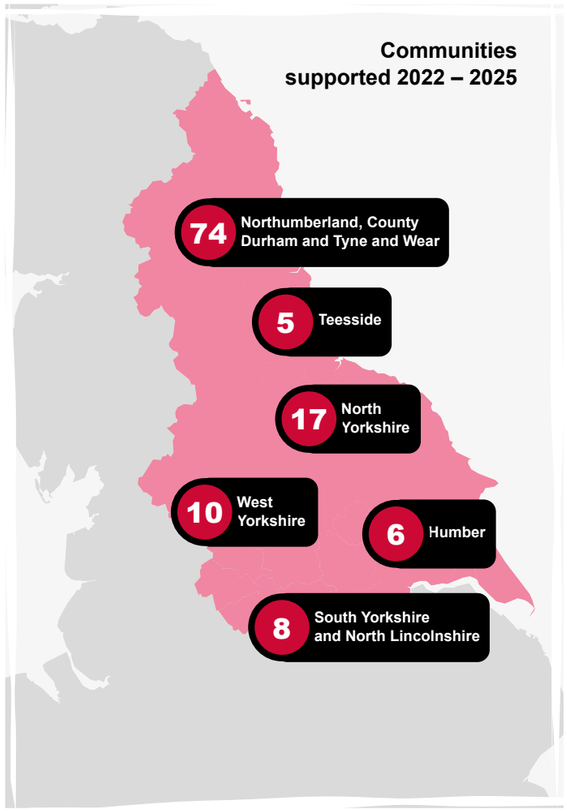
We are Respectful
We are an approachable, supportive team. We see great value in collaboration and partnership and truly believe in the power of community.

Our impact

We fund projects where we can make the biggest difference. Sometimes this means supporting fewer people but providing deeper help.

Our decisions are guided by data and evidence. During this strategy period, we'll create a new impact framework to better understand the difference we're making and ensure our funding reaches the right communities and initiatives.

We're committed to learning and adapting so we can deliver the greatest possible impact.



"Without the Northern Powergrid Foundation grant our hall couldn't function in all weathers.

We have had two storms and power cuts in which the hall remained functional and appreciated during the outages."

Northern Powergrid Foundation beneficiary



About us

The Foundation

Northern Powergrid Foundation is the corporate grant-giving charity of the electricity distribution network in the North East, Yorkshire and northern Lincolnshire.

We were created in 2022, in the aftermath of Storm Arwen, to address significant gaps in community resilience in some of the most rural communities of the network.

Over the last three years, Northern Powergrid Foundation has made grants to over 100 organisations to do just that.

With grants of up to £20,000, village halls and community spaces across our region, have been able to install generators, or solar panels and battery storage, to ensure that they have an alternative power supply during a power cut, allowing them to offer a warm and safe space for nearby residents to go to.

Enhancing resilience will always be a part of our story, but our next chapter needs to be about more than providing alternative power during a power cut. There are many other challenges facing organisations and individuals in our region relating to energy, and this new strategy will start to explore the role we can play in helping overcome these.

Our Parent Company

Northern Powergrid is the electricity distribution network operator, covering two licence areas in the North East, Yorkshire and northern Lincolnshire.

They serve 8 million customers, across almost 4 million homes and businesses and are a critical part of our energy infrastructure in the UK, transporting electricity from National Grid connection points to the meter point of your home or business, through a network of overhead lines, underground cables, and substations.

They have a vision "to be the best energy company in serving our customers while delivering sustainable energy solutions", built around three key priorities: **enhancing network resilience, accelerating decarbonisation, and delivering outstanding customer service**. Investing £2.7bn in their current business plan period (2023 – 2028), they will modernise their infrastructure, integrate renewable energy, and provide innovative services that make energy more accessible and efficient for all.



NORTHERN POWERGRID Foundation

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Charity Registration Number: **1203185**