

**SONI'S DRAFT
TRANSMISSION
DEVELOPMENT
PLAN FOR
NORTHERN
IRELAND 2025-
2034**

**Consultation Paper
26 March 2026**

www.uregni.gov.uk

**Utility
Regulator** 

About the Utility Regulator

The Utility Regulator is the independent non-ministerial government department responsible for regulating Northern Ireland's electricity, gas, water and sewerage industries, to promote the short and long-term interests of consumers.

We are not a policy-making department of government, but we make sure that the energy and water utility industries in Northern Ireland are regulated and developed within ministerial policy as set out in our statutory duties.

We are governed by a Board of Directors and are accountable to the Northern Ireland Assembly through financial and annual reporting obligations.

We are based at Millenium House in the heart of Belfast. The Chief Executive and two Executive Directors lead teams in each of the main functional areas in the organisation: CEO Office; Price Controls; Networks and Energy Futures; and Markets and Consumer Protection and Enforcement. The staff team includes economists, engineers, accountants, utility specialists, legal advisors and administration professionals.

OUR MISSION

To protect the short and long-term interests of consumers of electricity, gas and water.

OUR VISION

To ensure value and sustainability in energy and water.

OUR VALUES

ACCOUNTABLE:

We take ownership of our actions.

TRANSPARENT:

Ensuring trust through openness and honesty.

COLLABORATIVE:

Connecting and working with others for a shared purpose.

DILIGENT:

Working with care and rigour.

RESPECTFUL:

Treating everyone with dignity and fairness.

ABSTRACT

SONI, as Transmission System Operator (TSO), is responsible for ensuring continuity of electricity supply for homes and businesses across Northern Ireland. In order to do so, SONI must plan investment in the transmission network. The Transmission Development Plan Northern Ireland (TDPNI) 2025- 2034 is the proposal for the development of the NI transmission network and interconnection over the ten years from 2025. This plan presents projects that are expected to be needed for the operation of the transmission network in the short and medium-term. This consultation follows on from the recent SONI consultation and provides an opportunity for stakeholders to share their views on the proposed approach. It is intended to support transparency and engagement by inviting feedback on the plans set out for the development of Northern Ireland's transmission network over the coming decade.

AUDIENCE

This document is likely to be of interest to regulated companies in the energy industry, government, industry groups, consumer bodies, environmental groups and those with an interest in the energy industry and network planning.

CONSUMER IMPACT

The TDPNI provides clarity to consumers on:

- (i) The drivers of electricity transmission investment;
- (ii) The need for action;
- (iii) The location and activity of network investment;
- (iv) The estimated cost and timing of project completion
- (v) Tomorrow's Energy Scenarios NI and
- (vi) Northern Ireland Projects in European Plans and Projects.

The consultation process also provides stakeholders with an opportunity to offer feedback on these proposals, helping to ensure that the final version of the TDPNI is informed by a broad range of views and reflects the needs of consumers.

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Executive Summary

The Transmission Development Plan for Northern Ireland (TDPNI) 2025-2034 is the proposal for the development of the Northern Ireland transmission network and interconnection over the ten years from 2025. This plan presents projects that are expected to be needed for the operation of the transmission network in the short and medium-term.

The TDPNI will help to achieve the strategic objectives as laid out by national and EU policies. The strategic objectives include:

- a) Ensuring the security of electricity supply;
- b) Ensuring the competitiveness of the national economy;
- c) Ensuring the long-term sustainability of electricity supply.

In accordance with its' licence (Condition 40), SONI must prepare a TDPNI every year. Under Article 22(4) of Directive 2009/72/EC, the Utility Regulator (UR¹) must then consult on the draft TDPNI prepared by SONI, this was then superseded by Article 51 of Directive 2019/944.

The last TDPNI was published in 2025, and we then published our decision paper² and approval of SONI's Transmission Development Plan for Northern Ireland (TDPNI) 2023-2032.

SONI has now consulted upon the Draft TDPNI 2025-2034 and has provided a response to representations received, to the Authority for consideration. UR has prepared this consultation paper calling for further comment on the TDPNI.

UR welcomes comments on all aspects of SONI's draft TDPNI.

UR will require SONI to fully consider all comments and suggestions submitted as part of the consultation, before submitting a final TDPNI for approval. The deadline for submitting responses to this consultation is 5pm on 01 May 2026.

¹ In this document we use the words "us" "our" "we" "Utility Regulator" and "Authority" in each case to refer to the Northern Ireland Authority for Utility Regulation: see Article 3 of the Energy (NI) Order 2003 (the Energy Order)

² UR Decision TDPNI 2023-2032.pdf

2. Introduction

Background

- 2.1 SONI is the independent electricity Transmission System Operator (TSO) for Northern Ireland. As part of its function as TSO, SONI has a licence obligation under Condition 40 to produce a Transmission Development Plan for Northern Ireland (TDPNI).
- 2.2 SONI has consulted upon a draft TDPNI for 2025-34³. Results have been considered and an updated plan has been submitted to the Authority.
- 2.3 Under Article 22(4) of Directive 2009/72/EC, the Authority must consult on the draft TDPNI prepared by SONI, this was then superseded by Article 51 of Directive 2019/944. The Authority has prepared this consultation paper calling for comment on the draft TDPNI 2025-34.

Related Documents

- 2.4 We had previously published our decision paper and approval of SONI's Transmission Development Plan for Northern Ireland (TDPNI) 2023-2032.
- 2.5 UR is now seeking views on the SONI Draft TDPNI 2025-2034⁴. This document should be read in conjunction with:
- a) SONI report - TDPNI Consultation Responses⁵;
 - b) Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) – Environmental Report⁶;
 - c) Habitats Regulation Assessment (HRA) – Report⁷.
- 2.6 The Authority welcomes comments / views on all aspects of SONI's draft 2025-2034 TDPNI.

³ Draft Transmission Plan for Northern Ireland 2025-2034 | SONI Consultation Portal

⁴ Draft Transmission Development Plan 25-34_0.pdf

⁵ <https://cms.soni.ltd.uk/sites/default/files/2026-03/Report%20on%20public%20consultation%20on%20draft%20TDPNI%202025-2034.pdf>

⁶ The SEA has a five year lifespan and was carried out in 2023, related documents associated with the development plan can be found https://cms.soni.ltd.uk/sites/default/files/2025-01/Strategic%20Environmental%20Assessment%20TDPNI%2023-32_0.pdf

⁷ Microsoft Word - IBE2144_SONI TDPNI 2 - HRA_F02_Jan25.docx

3. Overview

2023 - 2032 – Decision Paper

- 3.1 In 2025 we published our decision paper on the 2023-2032 TDPNI, on approval we drew a number of conclusions. These included the following:
- (i) Increasing renewables on the system, along with the importance of grid development projects and the North / South Interconnector, remain key to delivering on net zero targets and Northern Ireland's 80% RES targets
 - (ii) We must evolve to accommodate new technologies to lower minimum generation levels and reduce Northern Ireland's reliance on thermal generation
 - (iii) There are important action plans and legislative reforms that are to be delivered and implemented in our journey toward 2030
 - (iv) We encourage SONI and NIE Networks to continually place community engagement at the forefront of Northern Ireland's network infrastructure development
 - (v) SONI and NIE Networks must engage and work collaboratively under the framework of the Transmission Interface Arrangement to carry out and deliver the required network investment and related Transmission Owner (TO) asset replacement requirements.

2025 - 2034 Draft TDPNI

- 3.2 SONI's draft TDPNI 2025-34 is the sixth such plan that they have had to complete. This ten-year plan undertakes a variety of functions including:
- a) Outlining the drivers for network development;
 - b) Detailing the network investment needs;
 - c) Listing the projects and activity required to address these needs;
 - d) Describing the TSO's planning process;
 - e) Detailing project information i.e. category, planning area, location, activity, estimated cost and completion date.
 - f) Incorporating Tomorrow's Energy Scenarios NI

3.3 The draft TDPNI includes 150 different projects. Of this, 105 are NIE Networks asset replacement projects, and 45 are network development projects.

3.4 On a regional and project category basis, the 45 development projects are captured as follows:

Projects by Planning Area and Category				
Project Category	North-West	South-East	Both Areas	TOTAL
New Build	11	12	0	23
Uprate / Modify	9	10	1	20
Refurbish / Replace	0	0	0	0
Combination / Other	0	2	0	2
TOTAL	20	24	1	45

2025-2034work Development Projects

3.5 In comparison with last year, two projects have been removed due to their completion, thirteen new projects have been included, five projects have been renamed, and two projects have been put on hold.

3.6 For the current projects, 23 are New Builds, 20 are Uprates/Modifications, and 2 are a Combination of the above, or 'Other'.

3.7 In addition, several projects have recently had their forecast completion dates pushed later, this is a theme which has been developing over multiple TDPNI reports, however it reflects ongoing adjustments to the process, such as the implementation of the Joint Programme Management Office (JPMO).

3.8 SONI expenditure on transmission development projects is estimated at £128.10 million for the ten-year period. This figure is the amount SONI states are required to bring projects to the point of handover to NIE Networks. Estimated TO costs associated with these projects are £971.06 million, as stated within SONI's Draft 2025-2034 TDPNI.

3.9 Total estimated asset replacement costs over the ten years covered by this plan are approximately £214.83 million, as stated within SONI's Draft 2025-2034 TDPNI.

- 3.10 The total estimated cost of all projects described in the TDPNI 2025-2034 is £1,313.99 million.
- 3.11 To allow for comparison of network development projects on a year-on-year basis, data is represented at a fixed point in time - the data freeze date. The data freeze date of the draft TDPNI 2025 is 13 August 2025.
- 3.12 The Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) which is the process of appraisal through which environmental protection and sustainable development may be considered and factored into national and local decisions regarding Government plans and programmes. The SEA report is used to evaluate the environmental effects of proposed policies before they are adopted. It should be noted that they have a five-year lifespan, therefore SONI's latest SEA was published on 28 September 2023.
- 3.13 The Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) is a mandatory process that evaluates the potential impacts of a proposed plan or project on protected European wildlife sites (SACs, SPAs, and Ramsar sites). It ensures that development proposals do not negatively affect the integrity of these sites. The HA report is a legal process used to determine whether a plan or project could harm protected wildlife sites. This is also anticipated to be valid for five years, SONI has published the latest HRA on 28 September 2023, which is available on SONI's Website⁸. The main findings of these assessments have influenced, and are incorporated into, the current draft Plan.
- 3.14 SONI has also produced a report summarising the feedback received from its own consultation. It further details the TSO responses to issues raised and subsequent changes made from the previous version of the TDPNI to the updated plan published alongside this document.
- 3.15 Following consultation, the Authority intends to consider responses and share findings with SONI. This will help inform the submission of a final TDPNI for approval.

Joint Programme Management Office

- 3.16 In response to concerns regarding grid delivery timelines, SONI and NIE Networks established a Joint Programme Management Office (JPMO) in 2024. This provides a comprehensive review of all major transmission reinforcement projects.
- 3.17 The JPMO process is used to jointly agree estimated completion dates. These dates have been incorporated into the draft TDPNI report and will continue to guide future updates on the delivery of Northern Ireland's transmission network projects.

⁸ <http://www.soni.ltd.uk/the-grid/projects/tdpni/related-documents/>

- 3.18 The estimated completion dates are explained using four project categories, detailed as; conceptual projects, projects in (system) planning, projects in pre-construction and projects in delivery.

- 3.19 Within the consultation responses, one respondent, added that as *"updates from the JPMO would replace or supersede the established Associated Transmission Reinforcement ('ATR') updates"* a new process for reporting should be established. Renewable NI also raised this point. SONI responded that it has published its first quarterly update for the JPMO in February 2026⁹.
- 3.20 Another key theme that was seen through consultation responses is the concern for delays in the estimated completion dates, with many stakeholders pointing out that dates falling beyond 2030, making the achievement of 2030 targets increasingly challenging.

Transmission cluster policy

- 3.21 As part of SONI's draft TDPNI, SONI has included information on its Transmission Cluster Policy, which is intended to minimise the need for new transmission network reinforcement required, by maximising the use of existing capacity.
- 3.22 Under this policy, the initial costs are to be funded by the Northern Ireland consumer, with developers reimbursing these costs once they connect to the cluster substation.
- 3.23 SONI notes that this policy will support a more plan led approach to achieving decarbonisation targets. This approach is also central to SONI's *Shaping Our Electricity Future roadmap*¹⁰, published in 2023 which highlights the development of the transmission system and network as a key pillar.
- 3.24 Following the conclusion of the consultation process, SONI will incorporate the Transmission Cluster Policy into the TCCMS.
- 3.25 The proposed policy¹¹ includes the establishment of a cluster substation in the Fermanagh/West Tyrone area, as well as a 275/110 kV cluster substation near the existing Coolkeeragh–Magherafelt 275 kV double-circuit corridor in the North Sperrin region.

⁹ JPMO - Network Delivery Portfolio Q1 2026

¹⁰ Shaping Our Electricity Future | Future Energy | SONI

¹¹ [Transmission Cluster Policy Position Paper.pdf](#)

4. Next Steps

Consultation Responses

- 4.1 The deadline for responses to this consultation is 5pm on 01 May 2026. Responses should be sent to:

Jody O'Boyle
Utility Regulator
Millenium House
Great Victoria St
Belfast
BT2 7AQ

Jody.OBoyle@uregni.gov.uk and
Electricity_Networks_Responses@uregni.gov.uk

- 4.2 The Utility Regulator's preference would be for responses to be submitted by e-mail to the above email addresses. We welcome feedback on any aspect of the TDPNI.
- 4.3 Your response may be made public by the Utility Regulator. If you do not want all or part of your response or name made public, please state this clearly in the response by marking your response as 'CONFIDENTIAL.'
- 4.4 If you want other information that you provide to be treated as confidential, please be aware that, under the Freedom of Information Act 2000, there is a statutory Code of Practice with which public authorities must comply and which deals, amongst other things, with obligations of confidence. In view of this, it would be helpful if you could explain to us why you regard the information you have provided as confidential.
- 4.5 Information provided in response to this consultation, including personal information, may be subject to publication or disclosure in accordance with the access to information regimes (these are primarily the Freedom of Information Act 2000 and the Data Protection Act 2018).
- 4.6 As stated in the GDPR Privacy Statement for consumers and stakeholders, any personal data contained within your response will be deleted once the matter being consulted on has been concluded though the substance of the response may be retained.
- 4.7 This paper is available in alternative formats such as audio, Braille etc. If an alternative format is required, please contact us and we will be happy to assist.