



SONI's Draft Transmission Development Plan for Northern Ireland 2020-29

Consultation Paper
1st February 2021



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 Queens House in the centre of Belfast. The Chief Executive leads a management team of directors representing each of the key functional areas in the organisation: Corporate Affairs, Markets and Networks. 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

- Be a best practice regulator: transparent, consistent, proportionate, accountable and targeted.
- Be professional – listening, explaining and acting with integrity.
- Be a collaborative, co-operative and learning team.
- Be motivated and empowered to make a difference.



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) 2020-2029 is the proposal for the development of the NI transmission network and interconnection over the ten years from 2020. This plan presents projects that are expected to be needed for the operation of the transmission network in the short and medium-term.

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:

- 1) The drivers of electricity transmission investment;
- 2) The need for action;
- 3) The location and activity of network investment;
- 4) The estimated cost and timing of project completion and
- 5) Tomorrows Energy Scenarios NI



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Executive Summary

The Transmission Development Plan for Northern Ireland (TDPNI) 2020-2029 is the proposals for the development of the NI transmission network and interconnection over the ten years from 2020. 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 (UR) must then consult on the draft TDPNI prepared by SONI.

Last year we published our [decision](#) paper and [approval](#) of SONI's Transmission Development Plan for Northern Ireland (TDPNI) 2019-2028.

SONI has now consulted upon the [Draft TDPNI 2020-2029](#) plan and submitted a [new draft TDPNI](#) to the UR for consideration. The UR has prepared this consultation paper calling for comment on the TDPNI.

UR welcomes comments on all aspects of SONI's draft TDPNI. Commentary is also sought any associated supporting documents.

The 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 01/03/2021.

1. Introduction

Background

- 1.1 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).
- 1.2 SONI has consulted upon a draft TDPNI for 2020-29. Results have been considered and an updated plan has been submitted to the UR.
- 1.3 Under Article 22(4) of Directive [2009/72/EC](#), the UR must then consult on the draft TDPNI prepared by SONI. The UR has prepared this consultation paper calling for comment on the TDPNI 2020-29. Commentary is also sought on the associated supporting documents.

Related Documents

- 1.4 Last year we published our [decision](#) paper and [approval](#) of SONI's Transmission Development Plan for Northern Ireland (TDPNI) 2019-2028
- 1.5 UR is now seeking views on the SONI [Draft TDPNI 2020-2029¹](#). This document should be read in conjunction with:
 - a) SONI report - [TDPNI Consultation Responses](#);
 - b) Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) – [Environmental Report²](#);
 - c) Habitats Regulation Assessment (HRA) – [Report](#).
- 1.6 UR welcomes comments on all aspects of SONI's draft TDPNI. Views are requested on planned interconnection, forecast generation and demand growth, and the impact of further development on security of supply.

¹ [TDPNI2020-draft-for-SONI-consultation.pdf](#)

² The SEA has a five year lifespan and was carried out on TDPNI 2018-2027, related documents associated with the development plan can be found at <http://www.soni.ltd.uk/the-grid/projects/tdpni/related-documents/>

2. Overview

2019 - 2028 – Decision Paper

2.1 Last year we published our decision paper³ on the 2019-2028 TDPNI, on approval we recommended a number of information areas which will need to be addressed in future plans. This included the following:

- 1) Detail on renewable capacity including projected connection dates per project.
- 2) Continued monitoring of delivery against planned projects including reasoning for revised completion dates/costs.
- 3) Monitoring of estimated versus actual spend on completed projects.
- 4) Incorporation of Future Energy Scenarios work into the TDPNI on completion of Tomorrow Energy Scenario work streams.
- 5) Detail on the economic costs and benefits of certain projects or information on constraint problems which provide a context for action.

2020 - 2029 Draft TDPNI

2.2 SONI's draft TDPNI 2020-29 is the second such plan that they have had to complete. This ten year plan undertakes a variety of functions including:

- a) Outlines the drivers for network development;
- b) Details the network investment needs;
- c) Lists the projects and activity required to address these needs;
- d) Describes the TSO's planning process;
- e) Details project information i.e. category, planning area, location, activity, estimated cost and completion date.
- f) Incorporates Tomorrows Energy Scenarios NI

2.3 The draft TDPNI describes 79 different projects under this plan. Of this, 43 are NIE Networks asset replacement projects, and 36 are network development projects.

³ [TDPNI 2019 - 2028 Decision Paper.pdf \(uregni.gov.uk\)](#)

- 2.4 On a region and project category basis, the 36 development projects are captured as follows:

Projects by Planning Area and Category				
Project Category	North-West	South-East	Both Areas	TOTAL
New Build	10	6	0	16
Uprate / Modify	7	7	4	18
Refurbish / Replace	0	2	0	2
Combination/ Other	0	0	0	0
TOTAL	17	15	4	36

- 2.5 In comparison with last year, some projects have been cancelled; projects initiated and some projects have been reviewed and consolidated. Either moved from Refurbish / Replace to the Uprate / Modify Category and the Combination/ Other Category.
- 2.6 In our 2019-2028 TDPNI decision paper we asked SONI to also provide detail regarding changes, in costs and estimated completion dates from year to year. These changes from 2019-2028 TDPNI are available within the planning descriptions and also the tables in Appendix B of SONI 2020-2029 Draft TDPNI.
- 2.7 SONI expenditure on transmission development projects is estimated at £543m for the ten year period. This figure is the amount SONI state is required to bring projects to the point of handover to NIE Networks.
- 2.8 Estimated TAO (Transmission Asset Owner) costs associated with network asset replacement projects is £216m. The UR will determine the amount that can eventually be recovered from customer and generator tariffs for these projects.
- 2.9 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 TDPNI 2019 was 1 July 2020.
- 2.10 SONI have indicated that there has been a number of changes in project completion dates since the data freeze. These are detailed within section 1.7 of SONI's draft 2020-2029 TDPNI.

- 2.11 In regards to the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA), it should be noted that the SEA has a five year lifespan and was carried out on the TDPNI 2018-2027. The environmental report and shadow Habitats Regulations report are available on SONI's Website⁴. The main findings of these assessments have influenced and are incorporated into the current Plan.
- 2.12 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 document⁵.
- 2.13 Following consultation, UR intends to consider responses and share findings with SONI. This will help inform submission of a final TDPNI for approval.

3. Next Steps

Consultation Responses

- 3.1 The deadline for responses to this consultation is 5pm on 01/03/2021. Responses should be sent to:

Jody O'Boyle and Timothy Steele
Utility Regulator
Queens House
14 Queen Street
Belfast
BT1 6ED
Jody.O'Boyle@uregni.gov.uk , Timothy.steele@uregni.gov.uk SONIUREGNI@uregni.gov.uk

- 3.2 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 or associated documents.
- 3.3 Individual respondents may ask for their responses (in whole or in part) not to be published, or that their identity should be withheld from public disclosure. This should be indicated within their response.

⁴ <http://www.soni.ltd.uk/the-grid/projects/tdpni/related-documents/>

⁵ www.soni.ltd.uk/media/documents/Report-on-Draft-TDPNI-2020-2029-Public-Consultation.pdf

- 3.4 Where either of these is the case, the Utility Regulator will also ask respondents to supply the redacted version of the response that can be published.
- 3.5 As a public body and non-ministerial government department, the Utility Regulator is required to comply with the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA). The effect of FOIA may be that certain recorded information contained in consultation responses is required to be put into the public domain.
- 3.6 Hence it is now possible that all responses made to consultations will be discoverable under FOIA, even if respondents ask us to treat responses as confidential. It is therefore important that respondents take account of this and in particular, if asking the Utility Regulator to treat responses as confidential, respondents should specify why they consider the information in question should be treated as such.
- 3.7 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.