



SONI's Draft Transmission Development Plan for Northern Ireland 2019-28

Consultation Paper – 23 March 2020



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) 2019-2028 is the proposal for the development of the NI transmission network and interconnection over the ten years from 2019. 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; and
- 4) The estimated cost and timing of project completion.



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Executive Summary

The Transmission Development Plan for Northern Ireland (TDPNI) 2019-2028 is the proposals for the development of the NI transmission network and interconnection over the ten years from 2019. 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) 2018-2027.

SONI has now consulted upon the [Draft TDPNI 2019-28](#) 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 on the 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 05/05/2020.

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 2019-28. 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 2019-28. 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) 2018-2027
- 1.5 UR is now seeking views on the SONI [Draft TDPNI 2019-28](#)¹. This document should be read in conjunction with:
 - a) SONI report - [TDPNI Consultation Responses](#);
 - b) Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) – [Environmental Report](#)²;
 - 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 <http://www.soni.ltd.uk/media/documents/Transmission-Development-Plan-Northern-Ireland-Draft-2019-2028.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

2018 – Decision Paper

2.1 Last year we published our decision paper³ on the 2018 TDPNI, on approval we recommended a number of information areas which will need to be addressed in future plans. This included the following:

- 1) Information on work progress and activity required to maximise export capacity on the Moyle Interconnector.
- 2) Original and revised estimated completion dates for projects, with detail on reasons for delay.
- 3) Monitoring of delivery against planned completion dates.
- 4) Incorporation of Future Energy Scenarios work into the TDPNI.
- 5) Detail on the economic costs and benefits of certain projects or information on constraint problems which provide a context for action.

2019 - 2028 Draft TDPNI

2.2 SONI's draft TDPNI 2019-28 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.

2.3 The draft TDPNI describes 80 different projects under this plan. Of this, 39 are NIE Networks asset replacement projects, and 41 are network development projects.

³ <https://www.uregni.gov.uk/news-centre/decision-paper-transmission-development-plan-northern-ireland>

2.4 On a region and project category basis, the 41 development projects are captured as follows:

Projects by Planning Area and Category				
Project Category	North-West	South-East	Both Areas	TOTAL
New Build	9	9	0	18
Uprate / Modify	8	7	5	20
Refurbish / Replace	0	0	0	0
Combination/ Other	0	3	0	3
TOTAL	17	19	5	41

- 2.5 In comparison with last year, some projects have been cancelled; new projects have come on the list and the projects totals have moved from Refurbish / Replace to the Uprate / Modify Category and the Combination/ Other Category.
- 2.6 We have asked SONI to also provide a spreadsheet detailing changes, in costs and estimated completion dates from year to year. This spreadsheet – “SONI TSO Spend and TAO Estimate - 2018 v 2019” is published alongside this paper.
- 2.7 SONI expenditure on transmission development projects is estimated at £42.1m 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 these projects are £450m. 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 January 2019.
- 2.10 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.
- 2.11 SONI has also produced a report summarising the feedback received from

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

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.

- 2.12 Following consultation, UR intends to consider responses and share findings with SONI. This will help inform submission of a final TDPNI for approval.

⁵ <http://www.soni.ltd.uk/media/documents/Report-on-Draft-TDPNI-2019-2028-SONI-Consultation.pdf>

3. Next Steps

Consultation Responses

- 3.1 The deadline for responses to this consultation is 5pm on 05/05/2020. Responses should be sent to:

Jody O'Boyle
Utility Regulator
Queens House
14 Queen Street
Belfast
BT1 6ED
Jody.OBoyle@uregni.gov.uk and 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. 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.
- 3.3 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.
- 3.4 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.
- 3.5 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.
- 3.6 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.