



Powering The Future:  
SONI's Grid  
Development  
Process



The current. The future.



## Who we are.

SONI (System Operator for Northern Ireland) plans and operates the electricity transmission system. We bring electricity to every part of Northern Ireland and plan ahead for future growth.

From our Control Centre in Belfast, we match supply and demand for power every second of every day by using the transmission system.

The transmission system, or grid, brings power from where it is generated to where it is needed and also powers NIE Networks' distribution system, which in turn, supplies electricity to homes, farms and businesses.

We need to plan the development of the transmission system to ensure a safe, secure, economic and reliable electricity network. This includes allowing for growth in demand and connecting new generation sources including renewables. From time to time we need to develop individual projects which we do in co-operation with NIE Networks.

This brochure sets out how we make decisions on these investment projects and how you can input into them. Our three part process puts stakeholder and public consultation at the heart of how we develop the transmission grid.

By working together, we can create a stronger electricity system for Northern Ireland – with the least possible inconvenience to you.

## PART 1

Identifying the optimum solution and what area may be affected



### What's happening?

When we identify the need for a project we then have to consider how it is best delivered. This means looking at a number of solutions and narrowing these down based on their technical viability, deliverability, cost, potential impact on the environment and on those living and working in the general area where the project may be located.

This part of the process allows us to have a clearer idea of which technology is appropriate to use, for example overhead line or underground cable, and the likely general area for siting the project.

When we have thoroughly researched the potential solutions, we will have what we call **'a best performing technology solution'**.

### Our commitment to you.

Your opinions and feedback are important to us; in this part of the process we will provide opportunities for you to have your say. We will consider your views and make changes as appropriate, before we finalise **the best performing technology solution** and the general area where the project may be located.

### What we have decided at the end of this Part?

What technology we are going to use; i.e. overhead line or underground cable and the general area where we may locate the project.

## PART 2

Identifying where  
the project will  
be built



### What's happening?

We look at all locations within the general area where we may site the project. We examine these locations and the technical specifications of the project in more detail based on their technical, deliverability, cost and environmental merits. This enables us to narrow our choice to what we call **'a best performing location'**. We then, if required, prepare the planning application documentation for the proposed development for submission to the planning authority.

### Our commitment to you.

As in Part 1, we will provide you with opportunities to participate in the process and to tell us what you think. Your knowledge of your area and your insight is important to us and so, we will listen to you and consider your views before we finalise the location. Working in partnership with you is key to this process.

### What we have decided at the end of this Part?

The final location for the project. We will also apply for planning permission if required.

## PART 3

### Planning application to project handover to NIE Networks

## What's happening?

The planning application is lodged with the planning authority. The planning authority will make a legally binding decision on the project. It may grant full planning permission, grant permission on the basis that we make changes, or refuse permission. Should we receive a favourable decision from the planning authority, we will hand the project over to NIE Networks for them to construct and energise.

## Our commitment to you.

We will continue to engage with local communities and landowners in the vicinity of the project during the planning application determination period and ensure that everyone who is interested is kept informed.

## What we have decided at the end of this Part?

To hand over the project to NIE Networks for construction and energisation.



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