



**Further
Environmental
Information 2019**
NON TECHNICAL SUMMARY
Volume 1



Tyrone Cavan
Interconnector

The current. The future.



Part funded by
EU TEN-E Initiative

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1. Introduction

1. On 23rd January 2018, the Department for Infrastructure granted the planning permissions (O/2009/0792/F & O/2013/0214/F) (“the Planning Permissions”) for the Tyrone – Cavan Interconnector. This followed an extensive planning process, which commenced in 2009 when the planning application was submitted in December of that year. The Environmental Impact Assessment¹ (EIA) of the Tyrone – Cavan Interconnector was based on the:
 - Consolidated Environmental Statement (2013);
 - Consolidated Environmental Statement Addendum (2015); and,
 - Technical Reports and Rebuttals submitted for the 2017 Public Inquiry.
2. All are available at: <http://www.soni.ltd.uk/the-grid/projects/tyrone-cavan/related-documents/>
3. As the project has developed over a number of years, the names used to describe the project have also developed. For clarity, the following terms have been used:
 - The **Tyrone – Cavan Interconnector**: That portion of the proposed interconnector located in Northern Ireland being proposed by SONI; and
 - The **North - South 400 kV Interconnection Development**: That portion of the proposed interconnector located in Ireland proposed by EirGrid, which has been consented by the relevant authority in Ireland, An Bord Pleanála.
 - **The proposed interconnector**: The overall project from Turleenan to Woodland (i.e. both the SONI and EirGrid sections), including all proposed works.
4. In February 2019, the Supreme Court in Ireland² upheld planning approval for the North - South 400 kV Interconnection Development. However, following legal challenges the High Court determined on 20th March 2019 that the planning permissions for the Tyrone – Cavan Interconnector in Northern Ireland should be overturned due to the absence of a Minister with power to grant the permissions.
5. In March 2019, the Department for Infrastructure (Planning) wrote to statutory bodies³ to ask if they considered any further information is required to enable the Department for Infrastructure to re-determine the planning applications for the Tyrone – Cavan Interconnector. The majority of consultees did not raise any issues and did not ask for more information. Where comments were made, they have been considered in this 2019 Addendum.
6. This Non-Technical Summary summarises what changes (as detailed in the Main Text in Volume 2 of this 2019 Addendum) have occurred in the existing environment since the previously submitted publications.

2. Need

1. The need for the Tyrone – Cavan Interconnector has been established by SONI and confirmed in the Planning Appeals Commission’s report (2017). The Tyrone - Cavan Interconnector is required to help reduce electricity prices, facilitate renewables and to improve security of supply.
2. The Planning Appeals Commission report states: *“there is persuasive strategic need for the proposed development at both national and regional level”*. The report further states: *“Regardless of NI’s future relationship with the EU, an affordable, sustainable and secure electricity supply will continue to be of vital importance to domestic, commercial and industrial consumers”*. (Paragraph 4.62, Page 43).

¹ The study of the project, its environmental impacts and the proposed measures to reduce any impacts (mitigation).

² Sometimes referred to as the Republic of Ireland.

³ Mostly government bodies

3. Since the 2017 Public Inquiry, SONI and EirGrid have reviewed the need for the Tyrone - Cavan Interconnector and have concluded that the Tyrone - Cavan Interconnector is still required for the same reasons as those set out previously.
4. As set out in the European Ten-Year Network Development Plan, the Tyrone - Cavan Interconnector remains consistent with the legal and regulatory obligations required of SONI by the Department for the Economy and by the Utility Regulator.
5. The implications of Brexit were considered by the Planning Appeals Commission in their report dated 20th November 2017. The Planning Appeals Commission report concluded that there is no evidence that either the UK government or NI Assembly want or propose to withdraw from the Single Electricity Market post Brexit: even if the Single Electricity Market were to be spilt into separate electricity markets, the proposed interconnector would still yield similar benefits through bilateral arrangements enabling NI to purchase cheaper electricity from Ireland (see paragraphs 2.27 – 2.29, pages 17 – 18 of the Planning Appeals Commission report).
6. Circumstances have not materially changed since the Planning Appeals Commission report. Both jurisdictions continue to support the continuance of the single electricity market. On the UK side, the government has acknowledged a risk that the Single Electricity Market could separate, but has stated that it will take all possible measures to ensure the continuance of the single electricity market⁴. In Ireland, legislation recently proposed by the Irish Government to Dáil Éireann provides for additional, short-term powers to the Commission for the Regulation of Utilities to facilitate the continuing operation of the Single Electricity Market in event of a no-deal Brexit (Brexit Omnibus Bill Part 4). The Single Electricity Market Committee, on 28th March 2019 issued a Notice to Industry in the event of a “no deal” Brexit. The notice advises that the Single Electricity Market would continue⁵.
7. At the European level, the project will continue to enjoy status as a Project of Common Interest⁶, which also confirms the need.

3. Planning and Development Context

1. The planning legislation in Northern Ireland for these applications has not changed since the now quashed decisions for the Tyrone – Cavan Interconnector Overhead Line and the Associated Works Applications were assessed.
2. The legislation for determining the planning applications remains the Planning Act (Northern Ireland) 2011 (the Act). The Department for Infrastructure remains responsible for determining applications of Regional Significance under Section 26 of the Act. Planning policy and the relevant Local Development Plans remain unchanged. As such the decision making context is the same as in January 2018 when the Department for Infrastructure took its original decision for the Tyrone – Cavan Interconnector. As there are no changes in the policy context and there are no changes to the conclusions of the predicted environmental impacts there are no grounds, apparent to SONI, to reach a conclusion that differs from the original approval.

4. Alternatives

1. Since the completion of the 2017 Public Inquiry, SONI and EirGrid have reviewed the assessment of alternatives for the project as described in the Environmental Impact Assessment. In December 2016, planning consent was granted for the part of the proposed interconnector located in Ireland⁷. Soon after, the Irish Government commissioned an International Expert Commission and requested that it re-examine the project in terms of the suitability of the proposed technological solution of an overhead line.

⁴ <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/the-electricity-sector-and-preparing-for-eu-exit>

⁵ <https://www.semcommittee.com/sites/semc/files/media-files/SEM%20Committee%20Statement%20-%20Notice%20to%20Industry%20on%20a%20%27no-deal%27%20Brexit.pdf>

⁶ This is a term for a key cross-border project supported by the European Union and other governments.

⁷ North - South 400 kV Interconnection Development

2. In April 2018, the International Expert Commission published its report⁸. It concluded that in terms of technology, cost and benefits, the interconnector design proposed by SONI and EirGrid is the “*most beneficial*”. The study found that an underground cable option would cost €450 million more than the overhead line option and provide less flexibility to the electricity network, and would not provide for the possibility of new economic development in local areas. Overall, the International Expert Commission report that was published supported SONI’s conclusions on the Tyrone – Cavan Interconnector design.

5. Addendum (2019) Environmental Information

1. Based on the responses from statutory bodies and a detailed review of current and proposed environmental standards, guidelines and legislation, the following information has been provided in the 2019 Addendum. As part of this process, it has been determined that no further environmental information is required for Soils, Geology and Groundwater, Noise and Vibration, Telecommunications and Aviation Assets, Flood Risk Assessment and Transboundary Impacts.

Electro Magnetic Fields (EMFs)

2. There have been no further publications or studies which would change the previous EMFs assessment for the Tyrone – Cavan Interconnector. There is a paper (Swanson & Bunch, 2018)⁹ which has been published, which helps to strengthen the previous EMFs assessment. This paper weakens the evidence that there are any increased risks from magnetic fields. The paper also slightly strengthens the evidence for a possible effect involving factors not related to EMFs.
3. The proposed Tyrone – Cavan Interconnector will fully comply with the Government policy on exposure of the general public to EMFs. The proposed overhead line complies with the EMFs limits at all places underneath it and beyond. A person standing directly under the overhead line would be within the exposure guidelines.
4. In 2016, planning permission was granted for the change of use from a garden centre to an activity centre directly below the proposed overhead line. The garden centre was assessed in the Consolidated ES (2013). There will be no change and no effect in terms of the EMFs exposure or other EMFs impacts. The proposed overhead line will be at least 15m above ground level at the proposed outdoor activity centre with sufficient clearance between the play equipment and the overhead line and will operate within the relevant Code of Practice.

Water Environment

5. A review has been undertaken to establish whether there are any changes which would require an updated assessment of impacts upon the water environment. Since the publication of the previous water environmental assessment, there have been updates to the published water quality data for waterbodies in the area and relevant legislation. Generally, conditions of the water environment within the study area have shown improvement from previously published data.
6. In addition, there have been updates to the environmental good practice guidance for the whole of the UK, and environmental regulatory guidance directly related to Northern Ireland. These documents have been and will also be taken into account during the construction stage; however, there are no changes required to the mitigation measures.
7. There are no changes to the previous conclusions of the Water Environment assessment.

⁸ <https://www.dccae.gov.ie/en-ie/energy/publications/Pages/Independent-Studies-in-relation-to-the-North-South-Interconnector-project.aspx>

⁹ Swanson J. & Bunch K.J. (2018) Reanalysis of risks of childhood leukaemia with distance from overhead power lines in the UK. J. Radiol. Prot. 38 N30–N35 (6pp)

Ecology

8. In preparation for this 2019 Addendum, the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (Natural Environment Division) requested that further ecological surveys be completed. Since the 2017 Public Inquiry, there have been no significant changes to the guidance or legislation relating to ecological assessment.
9. In 2018 and 2019, updated ecological surveys were completed. Updates were carried out for: desktop review of designated sites; Phase 1 Habitat survey (including invasive species); bat surveys (activity, tree assessment, and emergence / re-entry); and, badger, otter, smooth newt, breeding birds, wintering birds, and barn owl surveys.
10. An updated assessment of potential effects on designated European sites has been carried out. This assessment takes into account the updated ecological surveys and, having regard to up-to-date case law and guidance, concludes that the findings of the previous assessment remain the same.
11. The conclusions remain unchanged from the previous reports for the Tyrone – Cavan Interconnector. It was concluded in these reports that the provision of the proposed substation and the overhead line will have a minimal impact on the ecology of the line route. Extensive ecological assessment has shown that with mitigation the long-term effects on habitats, species and biodiversity will be negligible.

Cultural Heritage

12. A review of the Historic Environment Division Heritage Map Viewer during the preparation of the 2019 Addendum document identified an additional 19 cultural heritage features since the previous assessment. These sites are not directly affected by the proposed works and are not monuments recorded on the data sets held by the Historic Environment Division. The sites are all associated with post-medieval settlement and land-use. No impacts are predicted on the newly identified assets as they all fall outside of the footprint of the proposed works. There are no significant effects caused by changes to their settings.
13. A review of designated assets in the wider 5km study area did not reveal any additional sites. There is no change to the previous conclusion of the cultural heritage assessment.

Landscape and Visual

14. Fieldwork was undertaken in May 2019 to review the existing baseline landscape and visual environment and assess the extent of any change since the previously submitted assessment. For the majority of the Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment study area there has been no significant change to the baseline conditions reported in the previous assessment. As a result, there has been no change to the landscape assessment.
15. The field surveys and review of planning applications identified newly proposed or constructed residential properties. A small number of new individual residential properties have been identified within the 500m study area. Of these, only 12 would experience significant effects. This is to be expected given their distance to the Tyrone – Cavan Interconnector and / or nature of the visual amenity and views in these locations. This is consistent with the pattern of significant effects identified for individual residential properties in the previous assessment.
16. In the previous landscape and visual assessment, 34 viewpoints were identified and agreed with what is now the Department for Infrastructure and the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs. These 34 viewpoints were chosen as being representative of the experience of different types of landscape receptors within the study area. In 2019, the viewpoint photography was retaken and along with the field surveys, the extent of changes in the landscape were determined.
17. Overall it has been assessed that there are no significant changes in the landscape resource of the study area. In terms of visual effects, there are newly proposed or built receptors that will experience a significant visual effect. Additionally, there are existing receptors that would experience a reduced visual effect because of changes in the study area. There are no changes that would alter the conclusions of the previous landscape and visual assessment.

Community Amenity and Land Use

18. The methodology for the Land Use assessment for this Addendum (2019) included road side surveys in May 2019; re-examination of the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs statistics for Northern Ireland; re-examination of the Health and Safety statistics and publications; and examination of recent agricultural policy and farm agri-environmental schemes. SONI landowner liaison staff also carried out engagement with landowners along the route in May 2019 and this information has also been taken into consideration.
19. In terms of land use, there are no changes since the 2017 Public Inquiry that would change the previous information provided and the assessment that was undertaken.
20. In terms of Community Amenity, there will also be no new significant impacts from the Tyrone – Cavan Interconnector as a result of any new community or commercial facilities.
21. A planning permission was granted (LA08/2017/1492/O) for the replacement of Drumacavan Gospel Hall at 9 Hanslough Road, Middletown on 15th January 2018. Given this proposed development is 183 metres from the Tyrone – Cavan Interconnector (centreline), there will be no change to the previously assessed effects.
22. In line with best practice guidance published in 2016 by the Energy Networks Association¹⁰, it is recommended that angling activities should not take place within 30 metres of any overhead line. This will affect the area of the River Blackwater under the Tyrone – Cavan Interconnector. This will be a minor adverse impact and will not be significant.

Socio-economics

23. A desktop review was undertaken to identify any new tourism enterprises and to assess the potential impact on these facilities. The latest tourism data was obtained from Tourism Northern Ireland and Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency to establish a baseline for tourism in the area.
24. In assessing the economic impacts of the Tyrone – Cavan Interconnector, the previous information gathered on the likely employment and capital spend during construction and operation of the Tyrone – Cavan Interconnector from SONI has not changed and an update was not required.
25. No new significant impacts to visitor numbers or spending are anticipated as a result of the construction and operation stage of Tyrone – Cavan Interconnector. There will be a positive impact during construction relating to employment opportunities as part of the construction of the Tyrone – Cavan Interconnector.
26. During the construction phase, with the implementation of the proposed mitigation measures, there will overall be a temporary moderate adverse impact to the proposed outdoor activity centre. During operation, there is likely to be a significant adverse effect on the activity centre, however, the centre would safely operate under the overhead line (as noted in the EMFs assessment). This is the same effect as was on the site as a garden centre. This was assessed in Chapter 15 of the Consolidated ES (2013). Therefore, the assessment of the effect on the site is unchanged.

Transport

27. A review of the traffic assessment has been undertaken. This involved a review of traffic accidents, a review of proposed developments in the area, site surveys of all the proposed access tracks and resurvey of the traffic survey locations in the study area.
28. There are no new developments or changes to the access points for the Tyrone - Cavan Interconnector that would change the previous traffic assessment. The latest available accident statistics for the study area do not show any significant change in road safety or road conditions.

¹⁰http://www.energynetworks.org/assets/files/electricity/she/public_safety/angling/Angling%20Guidance%20Information%20Sheet%20Final.pdf

29. As the traffic flows recorded in 2019 have increased at the majority of the surveyed roads, the calculated traffic impacts in 2021 (estimated year of construction starting) have reduced at the majority of sites. The traffic impacts at seven of the surveyed sites have increased slightly. Overall however, the analysis has shown that every road on the network can accommodate the temporary level of development traffic predicted over the construction period. There is no change to the assessment of operational impacts, which will remain as negligible.
30. Since the previous assessment, a number of landfills have changed their status and alternative locations have been identified. New landfill sites are to be used for the construction of the scheme, however, as before, they can all be immediately accessed via A and B routes. For the purposes of this aspect of the Transport Assessment all these routes are suitable for the types and volumes of traffic generated by the Tyrone - Cavan Interconnector.
31. The previous traffic assessment concluded that the residual traffic and transport effects are temporary and of negligible significance. Mitigation measures will be put in place such as an appropriate traffic management plan and suitable liaison with the Department for Infrastructure (Roads). There is no change to that conclusion.

Air Quality and Climate

32. The air quality and climate assessment for the Tyrone - Cavan Interconnector has been reviewed to take account of changes since the Consolidated ES Addendum was submitted in 2015.
33. Air quality and climate legislation and assessment guidance have been updated since the publication of the Consolidated ES Addendum (2015). The revised documents have been reviewed and it has been determined that there are no resulting changes to the findings of the previous air quality assessment.
34. In 2018, Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council declared the whole borough an Air Quality Management Area. Roads in this area will be used by construction traffic. However, it is considered that the linear nature of the Tyrone - Cavan Interconnector and the temporary nature of the limited number of construction vehicles means that there will be no significant effect.
35. Despite changes in air quality and climate legislation and guidance and the new Air Quality Management Area, there is no change to the previous assessment. With mitigation, the Tyrone – Cavan Interconnector will not result in any significant air quality and climate effects.

Cumulative and Interaction Impacts

36. There are no new interactions or other developments which would change the previous cumulative assessment. A review of the planning websites for Northern Ireland and Monaghan has identified a number of new developments. However, these projects have been assessed and they will give rise to no significant cumulative effects. The findings of the previous assessment have not changed.

Overall Conclusions

37. A thorough and detailed update of the environment assessment has been completed as part of this 2019 Addendum. This Addendum builds on the assessment work which has been ongoing from 2007 for the Tyrone – Cavan Interconnector. It provides the Department for Infrastructure with up-to-date information on any changes in the study area and in terms of legislation, policy and guidelines. In summary, there are no changes that would amend the conclusions of the previously submitted reports.

6. Comments and Further Information

1. Requests for information on the planning process and comments on this report may be made to DfI Planning at: Clarence Court, 10-18 Adelaide Street, Belfast, BT2 8GB. Tel: 0300 200 7830. E-mail: planning@infrastructure-ni.gov.uk. The 2019 Addendum can be viewed at the Planning Service Headquarters (address given above) or at any of the locations listed below.
2. SONI, Armagh Information Centre, 16 Russell Street, Armagh, BT6A 9AA
Tel: 028 3752 7028

Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon District Council, Council Offices, The Palace Demesne, Armagh, BT60 4EL
Tel: 028 3752 9600

Portadown Library, Church Street, Portadown, County Armagh, BT63 3LQ
Tel No 028 3833 6122

Dungannon Library, Market Square, Dungannon, County Tyrone, BT70 1JD
Tel: 028 8772 2952

Mid Ulster Council, Dungannon Council Offices, Circular Rd, Dungannon, County Tyrone, BT71 6DT
Tel: 028 8772 0300
3. All the previous environmental reports for the Tyrone – Cavan Interconnector are available at: <http://www.soni.ltd.uk/the-grid/projects/tyrone-cavan/related-documents/>
4. The Environmental Impact Assessment documents, including this NTS and the Addendum, are available to download at www.soni.ltd.uk. An electronic copy of this Addendum on DVD and a hard copy of this Non-Technical Summary are also available free of charge, and may be obtained by contacting SONI at:

Grid Development NI Projects, SONI, 12 Manse Road, Belfast, BT6 9RT
Website: www.soni.ltd.uk Tel: 028 9079 4336
5. Printed and bound copies of the Addendum and Environmental Impact Assessment documents are available for £80. Should you wish to purchase a copy you can either:
 - (a) Write to SONI at the address above enclosing a cheque, made payable to SONI, for the appropriate amount. On receipt of this payment, the documents will be immediately dispatched, or
 - (b) Purchase the document directly at the SONI office in Armagh, at the address given above
6. Appointments can be made to meet with the SONI team at the Armagh Information Centre. Opening hours are 10am-4pm every Wednesday at: 16 Russell Street, Armagh, BT61 9AA. Meetings can also be arranged by appointment by phoning: 028 3752 7028 or emailing: armaghoffice@soni.ltd.uk.
7. In addition, the SONI Armagh office will be open to view or purchase a copy of the Environmental Impact Assessment documents, planning applications and to meet a member of the project team between 12 noon and 7pm during the following periods:
 - Every day from Monday 5th August to Friday 9th August 2019;
 - Every day from Monday 19th August to Friday 23rd August 2019.

Produced by SONI Limited
www.soni.ltd.uk

**Registered office, 12 Manse Road,
Belfast, BT6 9RT
Registered in N. Ireland NI 138715**

Printed by Ream Limited, Belfast

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