

# Mid Antrim Upgrade

Summer/Autumn 2023 Update



Delivering a cleaner  
energy future

## Who are SONI – and what do we do?

SONI is the electricity transmission system operator for Northern Ireland. This means we plan for the future of the electricity grid and operate it every minute of every day. This includes interconnecting to neighbouring grids and running the wholesale electricity market. We make sure that everyone has power when they need it, at the most economical price possible. The grid safely brings power from generators and sends it to NIE Networks. They then supply electricity to every home, farm, community, and business in Northern Ireland via their distribution network.

As Northern Ireland continues its move towards cleaner energy, the electricity system must also evolve. Investing in and improving the grid is essential to make your supply of electricity more reliable and cost effective. It also supports economic growth, enables competition, and helps to deliver a clean energy future.

## What is the ‘Mid Antrim Upgrade’ project?

We need to build new physical infrastructure in the Mid Antrim area to make it easier for renewable energy to move from where it is created in the North and West of Northern Ireland, to the bigger towns and cities in the east such as Ballymena, Antrim, and Belfast, where most electricity is used. This new infrastructure is called the Mid Antrim Upgrade.

## Why are we doing this?

### **To reduce the overload on the electricity system**

Right now, there is a bottleneck on the Kells to Rasharkin line which means we can't move that renewable energy around very quickly. This project will not only reduce congestion on the line and pave the way for more renewable energy to be generated, it will also save NI consumers an estimated £9.5m a year by 2030.

### **To increase the amount of clean energy transported to where it is needed**

Renewable energy is central to delivering a clean, low carbon electricity system, which will support Northern Ireland's clean electricity target of at least 80% renewable energy generation by 2030. We need to double the amount of renewable generation connected to the grid today by 2030, to meet the Northern Ireland Executive's Energy Strategy.

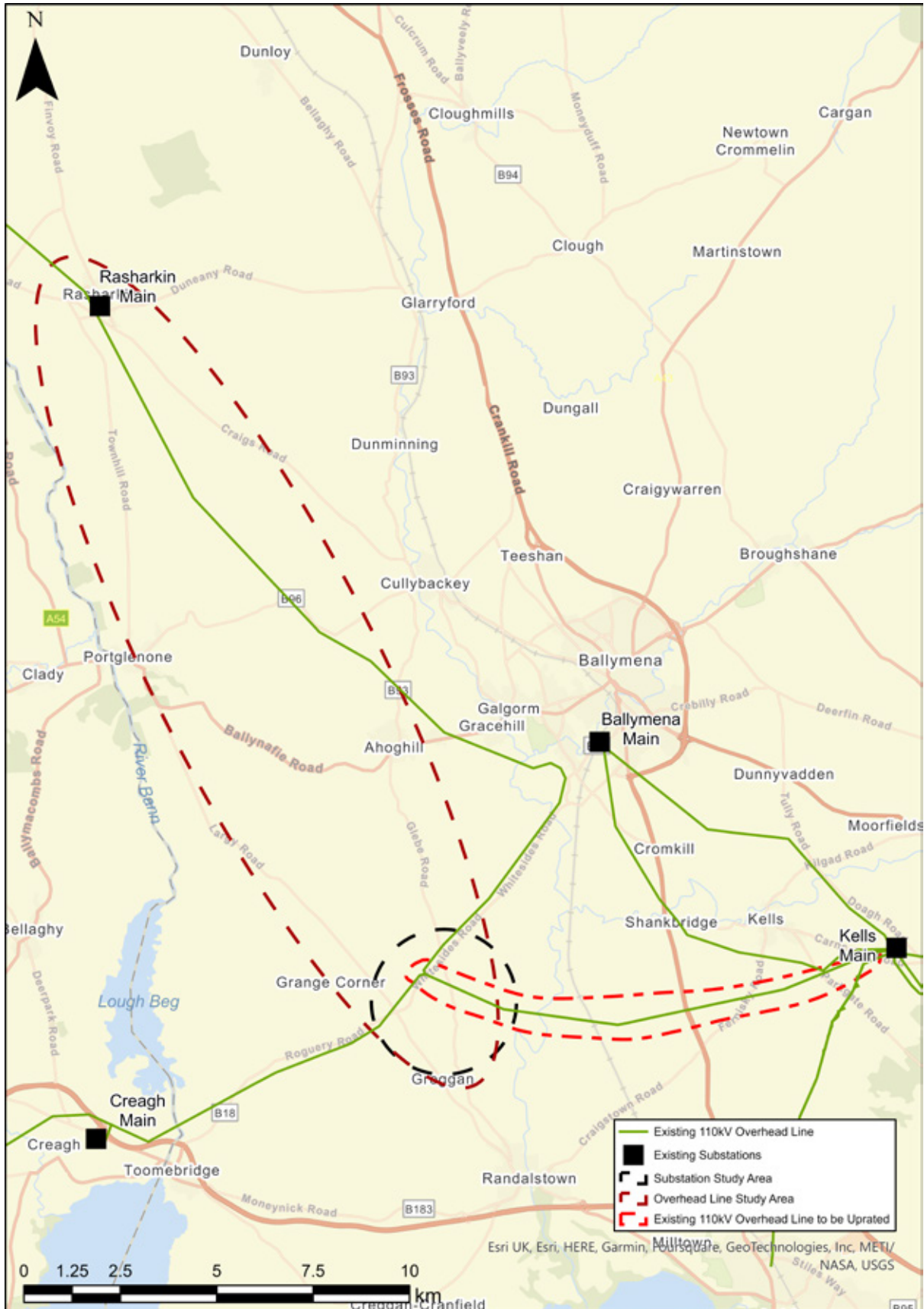
### **To strengthen the network**

This project will help to improve the efficiency of the whole electricity system, making sure we have a more efficient, secure, and sustainable electricity supply.



# What is the study area?

The map below represents the 'study area' for this project which includes the existing grid between Ballymena, Creagh, Kells and Rasharkin Main substations.



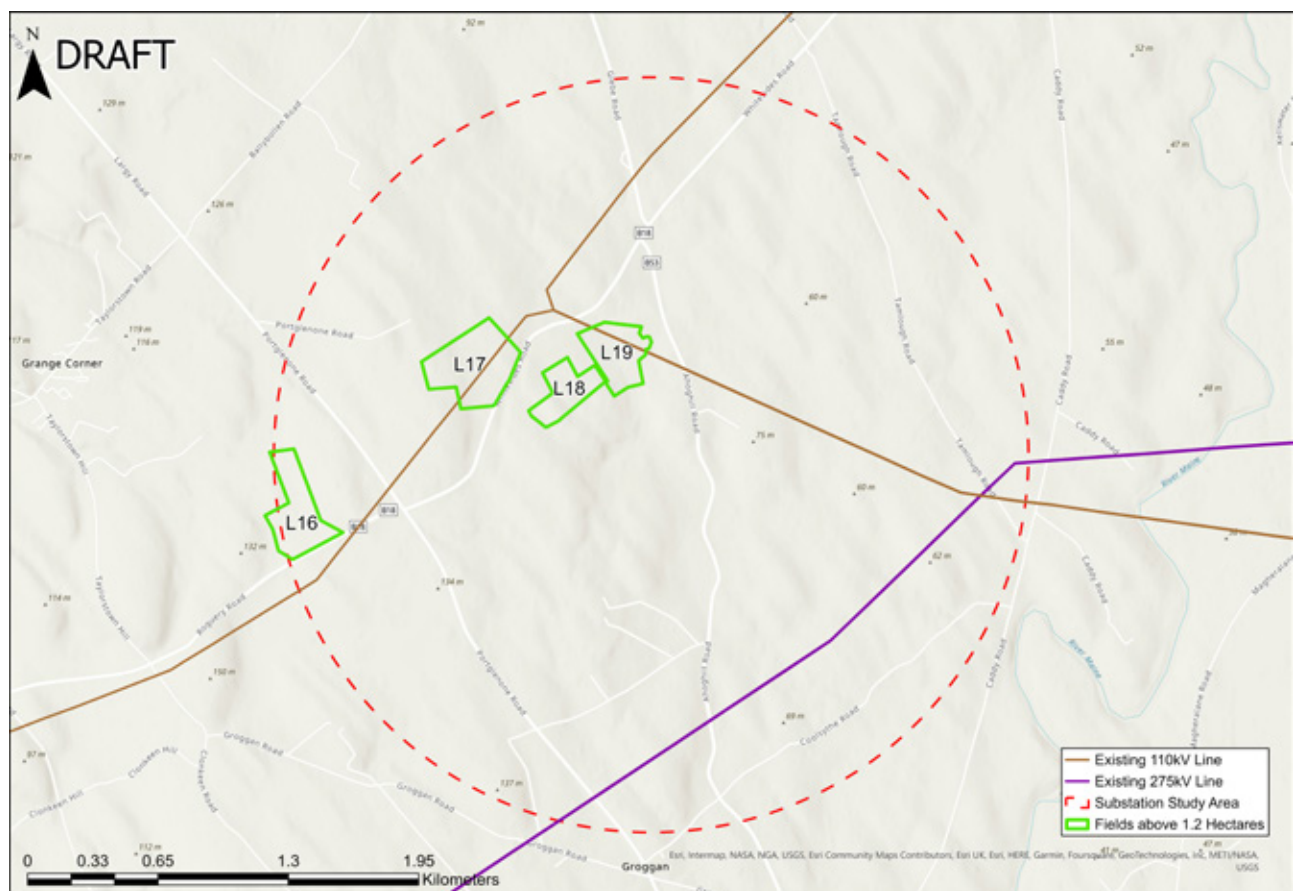
# What's happening now?

The project has now moved into Part 2b of SONI's 3-part process for Developing the Grid. SONI are now consulting on:

- four potential switching substations within the Terrygowan study area,
- three new overhead line circuit corridors from the proposed switching substation at Terrygowan to the outskirts of Rasharkin. This new circuit will be constructed on mainly wooden poles with steel towers at challenging angles,
- the potential impact of the proposed undergrounding of cabling for entry into Rasharkin Main substation. During this process we will be engaging with local stakeholders to gain feedback on the proposals from those who live in the area. We encourage you to engage with us and have your say during the consultation period.

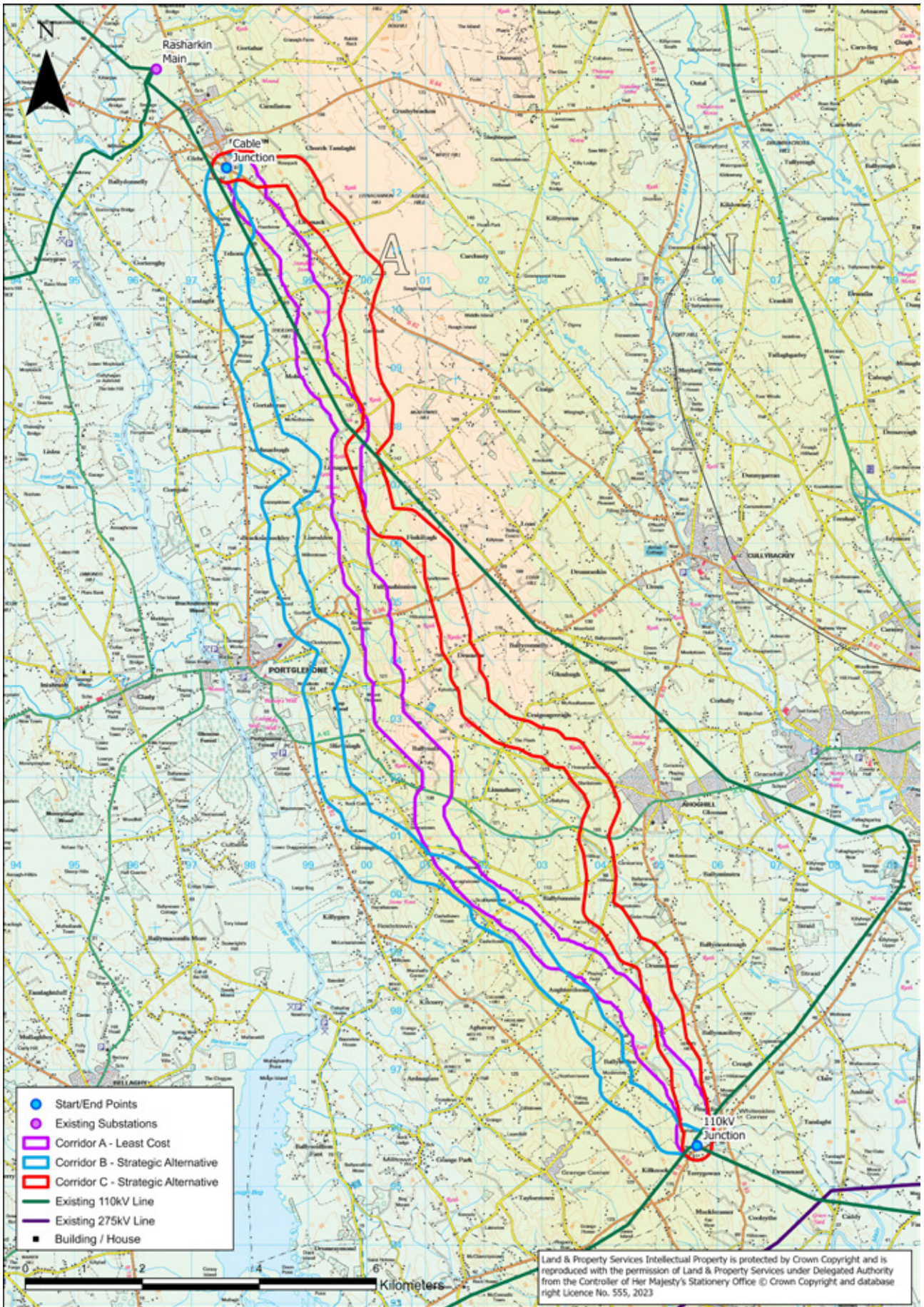
At the end of this part of the consultation process, we will publish a report outlining all the feedback received from stakeholders.

The maps below highlight the proposed sites of the new switching substation at Terrygowan and the proposed route corridors for the new line between the new switching substation at Terrygowan and the Rasharkin Main substation.



Potential Substation Sites





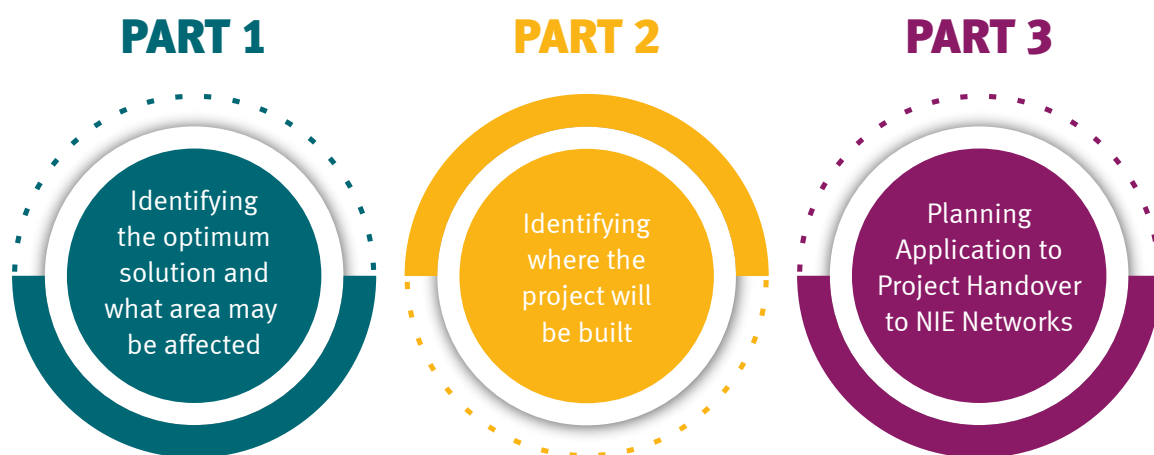
Potential Overhead Line Route Corridors



## Our 3-part process

We are committed to gaining your input on any decisions we make on our projects. Our 3-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.

### SONI's Grid Development Process



**Part 1: Identifying the optimum solution and what area may be affected.** When we have thoroughly researched the potential solutions, we will have what we call **'a best performing technology solution'**. At this point we provide opportunities for you to have your say, before we finalise the solution and the location for the project.

**Part 2: Identifying where the project will be built.** Once we have examined all locations within the general area for the project, we narrow our choice to what we call **'a best performing location'**. Again, we provide opportunities for you to participate in the process and tell us what you think before we finalise the location.

**Part 3: Planning application to project handover to NIE Networks.** Should we receive a favourable decision from the planning authority, we will hand the project over for NIE Networks to construct and energise. We will continue to engage with local communities and landowners in the vicinity of the project, and make sure everyone is kept informed.

The Mid Antrim Upgrade project is now within Part 2 of SONI's Grid Development Process.



## What has happened so far?

This project has completed Part 1 of SONI's 3-Part Process for Developing the Grid. During Part 1, we looked at the area surrounding Ballymena, Creagh and Kells and considered all environmental, technical, and economic factors to identify the best area for the new infrastructure to go.

Part 2 has been divided into three subcategories, parts 2a, 2b and 2c. Part 2a has been completed and it was an opportunity to introduce the project to the public and wider stakeholders by providing general areas of study. Part 2b, of which we are now commencing, will provide some further details on potential overhead line corridors and switching substation locations. Using feedback gathered in part 2b, we will select the preferred route corridor and switching substation location which will be followed by another round of engagement known as part 2c which is the Pre-Application Community Consultation phase and is part of the statutory planning process.





## How can I provide feedback?

There are many ways to get involved and provide feedback. These include:



Visiting the SONI Consultation Portal: <https://consult.soni.ltd.uk/>



Attending one of our consultation days, where members of the project team will be able to discuss the maintenance and construction aspects of the project with you:

**2pm-7pm, Tuesday 1st August 2023 at the Ross Park Hotel, Kells, BT42 3LZ**

**2pm-7pm, Thursday 17th August 2023 at The Bank, Portglenone, Portglenone, BT44 8HP**

**2pm-7pm, Thursday 31st August 2023 at Rasharkin Community Centre, Ballymena, BT44 8RX**



Email your submission to us at [midantrimupgrade@soni.ltd.uk](mailto:midantrimupgrade@soni.ltd.uk)



Write your own submission and freepost it back to us at 'Mid Antrim Upgrade Project, SONI, Castlereagh House, 12 Manse Road, Belfast, BT6 9RT'

You can follow us on LinkedIn – SONI Ltd or Twitter – @Soni\_ltd, or visit our project webpage at [www.soni.ltd.uk/the-grid/projects/mid-antrim-upgrade/the-project/](http://www.soni.ltd.uk/the-grid/projects/mid-antrim-upgrade/the-project/)

**We welcome your feedback up until Monday 9th October 2023.**



# Community Forum and Citizen Sounding Board

Public participation charity Involve were appointed by SONI to facilitate a two-part engagement process consisting of a Community Forum and a Citizen Sounding Board. This process enabled as diverse a group as possible to learn more about the upgrade and route options, giving them an opportunity to provide feedback that we can use when developing the preferred option for the upgrade.

The Community Forum, which met on several occasions, provided an opportunity for community representatives to come together to build their understanding of the proposed route options and substation locations. The Community Forum reflected the views of their organisation and/or community and provided information or insights that may need to be considered during project delivery.

The Citizen Sounding Board brought together a randomly selected group of people who live within the proposed area of the new overhead line and switching substation site, and broadly represent the entire community. Members of the Citizen Sounding Board, which met several times, were given the opportunity to learn more about the project, discussing their concerns and aspirations with one another, and then made recommendations about what should happen and how things should change.

Members of the Citizen Sounding Board discussing the proposed overhead line options





12 Manse Road, Belfast, Co Antrim BT6 9RT • Telephone: +44 (0)28 90794336 • [www.soni.ltd.uk](http://www.soni.ltd.uk)