



Energising  
**BELFAST**

Upgrading the electricity grid for 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 economic 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.

Investing in and improving the transmission 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 cleaner energy future.

## What is the ‘Energising Belfast’ project?

The ‘Energising Belfast’ project will ensure that Belfast City Centre, its people and its businesses have the clean energy needed to grow.

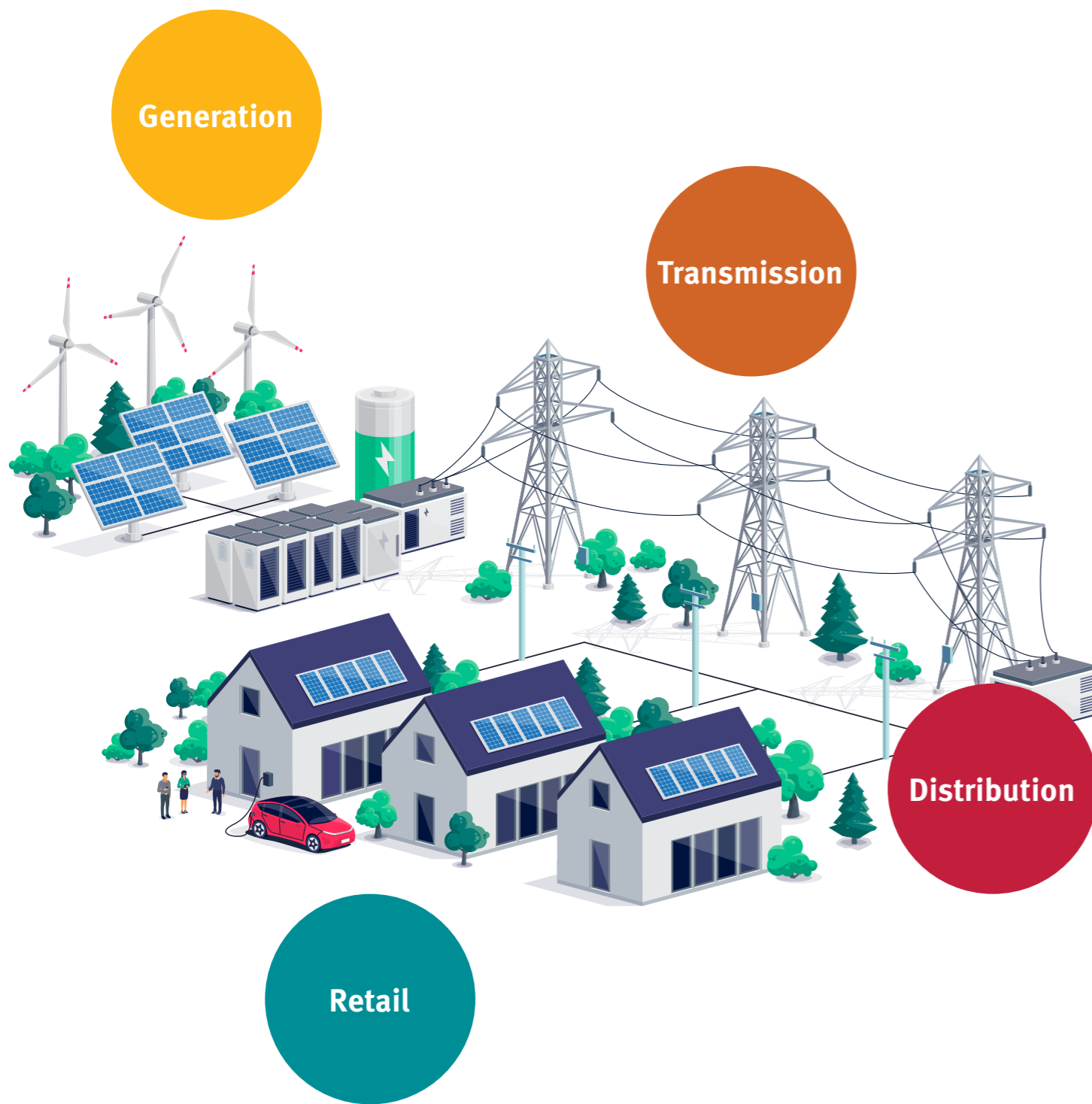
A thriving city centre is vital to the prosperity of the entire city and region and this project will deliver a grid ready to power the clean energy transition. This scheme will support the aspirations of Belfast City Council’s ‘Belfast Agenda’ to increase the employment and residential population in the city.

The project will future proof the transmission system in Belfast to ensure businesses have capacity and the power they need to expand in the near-term and into the future, supporting the economic and societal vision of the Belfast Region City Deal and all partner councils in the Greater Belfast area.

SONI are responsible for the design and securing planning consent and NIE Networks will lead on the construction phase of the project.

The project will deliver a new high-capacity underground cable in Belfast City Centre, as well as a new transformer at Castlereagh Main substation. We’re also assessing if it’s possible to build new substations at or next to existing sites in the city, or at new sites close by. This will mean we can remove older overhead lines in the future, and prepare the transmission system in the Greater Belfast area for future population and economic growth, as well as the electrification of heating and transport.





## Why are we doing this?

### Meeting electricity needs

We work to ensure Northern Ireland's electricity needs can be met minute by minute, as well as making plans for future electricity requirements. In doing this, we have identified that parts of the network serving Greater Belfast need to be replaced or upgraded.

### Building a reliable system and preparing for renewable energy

Based on our analysis, we've identified a solution so that the electricity network serving Greater Belfast will continue to operate reliably in the near future and be prepared for future economic and population growth. The project will make sure that Belfast residents and businesses have the power they need to facilitate the electrification of heating and transport – as we work to decarbonise the power system for future generations. This is vital if we are to deliver our climate ambition of at least 80% renewable generation by 2030.

### What areas will be affected?

A new high-capacity underground cable will connect Donegall Main substation (near Broadway roundabout) to substations at Belfast North Main (off Whitla Street) and Belfast Central Main (off Little Patrick Street), please see map on page 7. We are currently reviewing a range of options and could construct substations at or adjacent to existing substation sites in the city or at new sites close by. A new 275/110 kV transformer will also be installed at Castlereagh Main substation, while some minor modifications will be required to overhead lines at towers within the existing Finaghy substation.

### What's the next step?

We're now in Part 2 of our three-part process for Grid Development. During this process, we'll assess our options on sites for new substations in Belfast City Centre and determine the routes for new underground cables, in consultation with local stakeholders. This consultation period will allow us to gather as much information as we can from those who live and work in the area. We're looking at how best to deliver the project, what areas may be impacted and how we keep disruption to a minimum.





## What is the study area?

Studies undertaken by SONI have concluded that refurbishment of the existing tower line which passes through Belfast, including several built-up residential areas, is impractical due to the disruption it would cause to residents and the local community.



Following engagement with local key stakeholder groups during Part 1 of our three-part engagement process and using the information from our studies, we're proposing to deliver:

- a new 275/110 kV transformer at Castlereagh Main substation;
- new substations at or near to Belfast North Main (off Whitla Street) and Belfast Central Main (off Little Patrick Street);
- a new high-capacity underground cable connecting Donegall Main (near Broadway roundabout) to Belfast North Main and Belfast Central Main.

This option is supported by NIE Networks, who construct, maintain and own the grid infrastructure. We're committed to engaging, communicating and consulting with you on an ongoing basis.

Over the coming months, we will use your feedback and collaboration to help inform our final plans for this project.



## What are the benefits?

**Security and reliability of supply:** These improvements will build a more resilient and reliable grid, making sure that everyone has power when and where they need it.

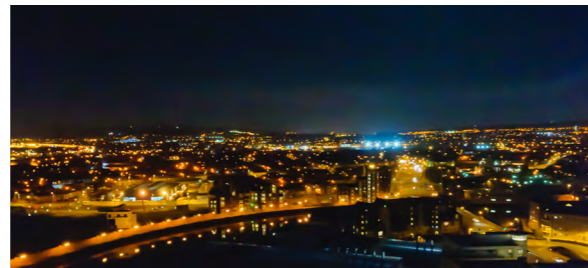
**Meet future needs:** These improvements will help meet the growing and changing electricity needs of Greater Belfast. This includes the electrification of transport systems, vehicles, heating and the development of housing, offices and large energy users.



**Sustainability:** This project will make sure that Belfast has the capacity and flexibility in the grid to handle greater levels of renewable energy, to deliver our climate ambition of at least 80% renewable generation by 2030.



**Economic:** These improvements will support future investment, economic and population growth – aligning with the vision of the Belfast Region City Deal.



## Our approach to consultation and engagement

We have six clear pledges which reinforce our approach to engaging with our stakeholders in the development of projects like this.

1. **Deliver information in a clear, transparent, and accessible way.**
2. **Encourage participation and provide opportunities to engage.**
3. **Build a trusted working relationship with stakeholders.**
4. **Listen to and consider feedback.**
5. **Respect people, their property and their communities.**
6. **Act with integrity, honesty and fairness.**

We're inviting you to give feedback on the Energising Belfast project.

We encourage you to engage with us and have your say as early as possible during the consultation period.

## How can I get involved?

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:

12-2pm or 4pm-7pm, **19<sup>th</sup> October 2022** at the MAC, Belfast, BT1 2NJ.

12-2pm or 4pm-7pm, **26<sup>th</sup> October 2022** at the Four Winds, Castlereagh, BT8 6LX.



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



Write your own submission and freepost it back to us at 'Energising Belfast, 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 for specific information about the project.

**We welcome your feedback up until 31 October 2022.**







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