



Comhairle Ceantair  
**Lár Uladh**  
**Mid Ulster**  
District Council

Mid Ulster District Council  
Planning Department  
Local Development Plan Team  
50 Ballyronan Road  
Magherafelt  
BT45 6EN  
Tel – 03000 132 132  
Email – [developmentplan@midulstercouncil.org](mailto:developmentplan@midulstercouncil.org)

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By email only: [info@soni.ltd.uk](mailto:info@soni.ltd.uk)

Dear Sir / Madam,

### **Consultation on SONI's Draft Transmission Development Plan 2021-2030**

I write in relation to the above consultation. Mid Ulster District Council welcome the opportunity to comment on the Transmission Development Plan for Northern Ireland (2021 – 2030) and have the following comments to make.

We welcome and acknowledge SONI's forward planning for increased electricity generation from renewable energy supply. We also note that Mid Ulster District extends into both the North and West and South-East Planning areas, with a number of projects planned within our district.

Mid Ulster District Council is concerned that the drive to ensure the reaching of the 70% target for renewable energy will focus on areas in Mid Ulster that are suited to wind energy. These areas include vulnerable landscapes such as the high Sperrins, Slieve Beagh and the shores of Lough Neagh and Lough Beg. We agree with the 70% target but are of the view that off shore wind energy is a much more sustainable means of achieving this.

In Mid Ulster, there are a large number of approvals for wind energy. In investing in ways of integrating this generation capability into the grid, it is important to think of ways in which local communities can benefit, particularly those communities who may be experiencing supply difficulties.

While we acknowledge you have been consulted and provided comment on our Local Development Plan (2030) – Draft Plan Strategy (DPS), we wish to draw your attention to policies proposed therein which we consider are particularly relevant and should be taken into account when finalising the TDPNI. The location of transmission infrastructure should be led by the Local Development Plan for the area.

Our DPS recognises the importance of overhead cables in a District like Mid Ulster because they enable a good electricity network to support new and existing rural homes. There are a few significant projects planned during the plan period, which

will seek to improve the transmission system in and around Mid Ulster, such as the north south interconnector which is referenced in the TDPNI.

However, we note that in relation to new technology, the TDPNI states that in most cases overhead line technology remains the most reliable and least expensive option for developing new circuits.

We wish to highlight that our Local Development Plan – Draft Plan Strategy - POLICY TOHS 1 – Outside of Special Countryside Areas and Areas of Constraint on Wind Turbines and High Structures states;

*Outside of Special Countryside Areas and Areas of Constraint on Wind Turbines and High Structures telecommunications development (including necessary enabling works) and overhead cable development will conform with the Plan where;*

*In the case of overhead cables, the chosen route follows the natural features of the environment and in urban areas, wirescape is kept to a minimum with preference being given to undergrounding.*

We also wish to draw attention to designated SCA's proposed in our DPS. While most of our District can adequately accommodate public utilities and high structures although it is important that our most vulnerable and distinctive landscapes are protected. Therefore, an SCA has been introduced on the top of the Sperrins and Slieve Beagh as well as along the loughshore. This SCA will exclude all surface level public utilities. In some slightly lower areas which are still classed as prominent ridges including the Sperrins, Clogher Valley and Slieve Beagh, and which are also sensitive to high structures, an additional layer of protection has been added in the form of an Area of Constraint on Wind Turbines and High Structures (AOCWTHS). We recognise that smaller structures below 15m height and essential electricity lines below 25m may still be required in these areas and these will be permitted within the AOCWTHS.

Please feel free to contact me should you wish to discuss any of the comments outlined above.

Kind Regards

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'C Boomer', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Chris Boomer  
Planning Manager