



Working with Landowners on Transmission Projects

Your guide



Introduction

Welcome to our guide for landowners on how SONI and Northern Ireland Electricity Networks plan and construct new electricity transmission infrastructure. This guide explains the steps involved and the opportunities that landowners have to engage with SONI and NIE Networks at each stage.



Our goal is to ensure that new transmission infrastructure projects have the least possible impact. We aim to minimise disruption to landowners, their land and their businesses.

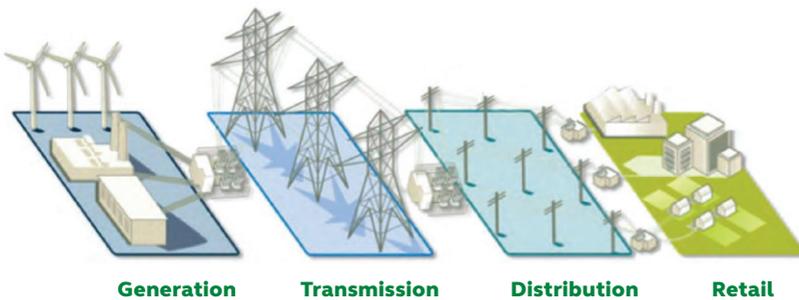
We depend on a good relationship with landowners to sustain a secure and efficient supply of electricity – now, and long into the future. Your continued support of our activities is essential to keep the lights on for everyone in Northern Ireland.



What is the transmission network?

The electricity transmission network – or grid – is a high voltage network that spans Northern Ireland. This grid also interconnects to the all-island market and to Great Britain.

We use the network/grid to move large amounts of electricity from where it is generated to where it is needed. This is achieved using a network of power lines, underground cables and substations.



In Northern Ireland, we classify the high-voltage transmission grid as any power line or cable that carries 110 kV, 275 kV or 400 kV.

As of January 2018, the high voltage electricity network in Northern Ireland includes:

- **800 km of 275 kV overhead lines (power lines);**
- **1447 km of 110 kV overhead lines (power lines), and;**
- **105 km of 110 kV underground cable.**



Who are SONI and NIE Networks?

SONI and NIE Networks are separate companies, with different responsibilities, which work in partnership to deliver a safe, reliable and economic supply of electricity in Northern Ireland. We also collaborate to plan, develop and construct new electricity transmission infrastructure.

A strong and secure electricity network is vital for Northern Ireland. It helps promote economic growth and allows for greater use of electricity from renewable sources.

SONI

SONI is the electricity Transmission System Operator (TSO) for Northern Ireland. SONI plans and operates the high voltage electricity transmission grid.

SONI became part of the EirGrid Group in March 2009. EirGrid is the Transmission System Operator in the Republic of Ireland. Working together, they operate the Single Electricity Market (SEM) across the island.

Every day, SONI ensures that there is enough electricity generated to meet the demand for electricity. This demand varies on a daily, weekly and seasonal basis.

SONI also examines current and projected use of electricity to ensure the network is secure and stable, and that it will remain so in the future.

SONI is responsible for pre-construction stages of new transmission infrastructure. This includes obtaining planning permissions, and consulting with affected landowners on a project. SONI consults with these landowners to agree how to gain access to their land, and to agree the transmission equipment to be installed on their land.

During the pre-construction stage of projects SONI will be the main point of contact for landowners. SONI's expert wayleave and liaison teams will work closely with you to address and resolve any issues of concern.



Northern Ireland Electricity Networks

NIE Networks is the owner of the electricity transmission and distribution networks in Northern Ireland, transporting electricity to over 860,000 customers including homes, farms and businesses.

Our role is to develop, maintain and construct the electricity infrastructure across Northern Ireland, connect customers to the network and ensure that our equipment is safe and reliable. To achieve this, NIE Networks invest over £100m in the network each year.

NIE Networks is responsible for the construction stage of transmission projects. This includes building electricity substations, erecting power lines and laying underground cables.

During the construction stage of projects, NIE Networks will be the point of contact for landowners. NIE Networks' experienced wayleave and project teams will be available to discuss any aspect of the construction process. Once built, NIE Networks will manage the new infrastructure throughout its lifetime.

Development of the Transmission Network

SONI has an obligation to plan ahead for future economic growth – this is a key part of its role as grid operator for Northern Ireland. SONI ensures that the grid or network is ready for future growth, or plan to reinforce and improve existing infrastructure if it is not.

Where SONI has identified the need to develop the grid, they follow a consistent project planning process. This allows SONI to explore options and make decisions based upon public and stakeholder feedback.

The decision-making tools used, and the amount of engagement carried out at each step, depends on the scale and complexity of each project. For a simple project upgrading equipment on an existing site, SONI would only engage with those directly affected. However, for a project involving new lines or cables they would consult widely from the start.



Here's an overview of the process.

Stage 1

Confirm the need for project, and consider the area that may be affected

This involves working through the various constraints, then exploring potential options and potential locations.

SONI confirms the need for a project and explains this need to elected representatives and interest groups.

After considering several technical solutions, a short-list of options is created. This could include a new line, substation or upgrades to existing lines.

Stage 2

Identify a preferred option

SONI will look at the broad study areas, route options and feedback from stage 1. They then narrow the analysis to a preferred option and its study area. In doing so, SONI will provide information on the methods used to analyse the options and study areas. SONI will then seek feedback and suggested inputs on the preferred design before it is finalised for planning.

Stage 3

Start the planning process

The relevant planning authority will make a legally binding decision on the project. They may grant full planning permission, grant permission on the basis that we make changes, or refuse planning permission.

Stage 4

Construct the new infrastructure, make it live and share the benefits

Assuming planning is granted, NIE Networks will then proceed with construction.

Engagement with landowners

This section explains how SONI and NIE Networks work with landowners. Our aim is to reach agreement and to minimise disruption when we plan new power lines, cables or substations.

Engaging early and in detail

SONI typically carries out two periods of landowner engagement at the pre-construction stage of a project:

- Before obtaining planning approval, SONI will engage with landowners to carry out environmental surveys on their land and to secure landowner consent where possible.
- After planning permission is obtained, SONI will notify landowners and will engage with them to secure their consent for NIE Networks to access their land to carry out construction work.

Agreeing land access arrangements

During the pre-construction stage of any project, SONI and NIE Networks may require access to your land. This could be for a variety of surveys and site investigations. Our aim is to mutually agree access and to provide advance notice of any such works.

Each landowner on a project will be asked by a SONI wayleave officer to sign a wayleave agreement. However, in certain circumstances we may need an easement. (See pages 10 and 11 for an explanation of these terms.)



The wayleave agreement or easement will include a map showing the proposed route of the line. This will show the proposed structure locations on each property. SONI will also ask the landowner to agree to the felling or cutting back of trees that could interfere with the construction or future use of the line.

To help SONI and the landowner agree wayleave arrangements, they typically meet to discuss the project. SONI will explain the practical details of the project, provide an expected start date and answer any questions. This meeting normally happens a considerable time before construction starts.

Closer to the start of construction, SONI will make an introduction between an NIE Networks representative and the landowner. This is the stage in the project where responsibility for engagement with landowners transfers from SONI to NIE Networks. The NIE Networks representative will agree a definitive date for the start of works on the landowner's land. They will also need to agree access routes and other project details. The NIE Networks representative will then liaise with the landowner throughout the construction phase.

Working together to minimise impact

SONI and NIE Networks recognise that farms are businesses and that landowners plan their activities with care, well ahead of time. For this reason, NIE Networks will aim to notify landowners about construction start dates and the expected duration as early as possible. This allows landowners to revise existing plans or make new arrangements.

Equally, NIE Networks will work to ensure construction has the least possible impact. For example, NIE Networks could delay access if the intended timing affects the gathering of silage or the harvesting of crops.

Wayleave officers for both SONI and NIE Networks understand the concerns of landowners. We will detail our plans step by step to identify any potential issues and to resolve them by agreement where possible. This allows farms to continue to operate with minimum disruption.

How wayleaves and easements work

SONI is responsible for obtaining landowner consent so transmission projects can happen. SONI needs these consents to permit NIE Networks to install and retain new infrastructure over and across the owner's lands.

When planning authorities approve new infrastructure, SONI approaches landowners to start this process. SONI will ask for either a wayleave agreement or a grant of easement in favour of NIE Networks. This will happen before NIE Networks starts construction of any new infrastructure.

What is a wayleave agreement?

A wayleave agreement is a contractual licence between NIE Networks and the landowner. It allows NIE Networks to access, construct and maintain their infrastructure for an agreed annual payment. Wayleaves are typically sought for overhead transmission lines (power lines) or related equipment placed over or on the owner's land. The details of the arrangements that SONI agree with each landowner are detailed in their wayleave agreement.

These wayleave agreements are voluntary. They permit NIE Networks to enter the land specified in the agreement and to carry out certain tasks. These typically include constructing new infrastructure, or surveying, monitoring and maintaining existing infrastructure.

Each wayleave agreement includes a map. This shows the proposed route of the line and the location of any structures that are to be placed on each individual property. Wayleave agreements for electric lines are not registered on the property folio.

SONI's wayleave officer will agree with each landowner the works needed to access the site and to construct the new infrastructure.

SONI aims, where possible, to decide these issues by mutual agreement.



What is a grant of easement?

It permits NIE Networks to construct and maintain electricity infrastructure. Grants of easement cover a defined width along the route of a new electricity line or cable and may limit the change of use of that land. They are a permanent arrangement, registered on property folios and marked on land registry maps. This is to ensure that should the land change hands, any new owner is aware of (and is subject to) the requirements of the easement.

In return for a grant of easement, landowners are compensated with a one-off payment based upon the current market value of the land. This one-off payment recognises the potential restriction that a new line or cable may cause to future development of those lands.

What happens if SONI and a landowner do not agree?

Our aim is to reach mutual agreement when negotiating all wayleaves and easements.

If agreement can't be reached, SONI will apply for what is called a "necessary wayleave" from the Department for the Economy. SONI will only do this with reluctance and in accordance with the provisions of the Electricity (Northern Ireland) Order 1992.

When SONI applies for a necessary wayleave, the Department for the Economy independently assesses this request. This means the landowner and SONI both make their case to an independent wayleave officer. This officer will assess the need for this particular wayleave and will consider the concerns of the landowner.



This process can lead to three possible outcomes:

1

A necessary wayleave is granted, permitting the installation of the new infrastructure.

2

SONI's application is refused and so they must find an alternative route or site for the new infrastructure.

3

A necessary wayleave is granted. This permits the installation of the new infrastructure, subject to specific conditions.

A similar process happens if a landowner objects to the felling of trees on their land. In this context, SONI can apply to the Department for Economy for a tree cutting order. As before, this request is assessed independently and is then granted, refused, or granted with conditions.

Works on your land

After SONI secures landowner agreements, they are handed over to NIE Networks so construction can start.

Before construction starts, a NIE Networks wayleave officer will meet with the landowner. This allows NIE Networks to review access routes and other details and to agree a definitive date for the start of construction. The wayleave officer will liaise with the landowner throughout the construction stage of the project.

When such work is being carried out, NIE Networks will:

- Ensure that apparatus on your land is constructed and maintained to the appropriate standard.
- Carry out all works in a safe manner to meet the standards of all applicable Health and Safety Legislation.
- Comply with all relevant statutory obligations or restrictions that apply to NIE Networks' work on your land.
- Where possible, minimise interference with farming, sporting, forestry and other land management operations.
- Fence the areas of work required to avoid injury to or straying of livestock. This will happen before work starts and where it is reasonable and necessary.
- Minimise damage to vegetation and land.
- Respect your rights, privacy, property and activities.
- Ensure the project operates to agreed conditions and that the affected land is reinstated as agreed.

Damage and compensation

During construction works, NIE Networks will take all reasonable steps to avoid, or minimise, damage to your property.

If damage does occur, NIE Networks will be responsible for making good the damage or paying reasonable compensation. This applies to any damage caused by the actions of its employees and contractors during the course of the works.

NIE Networks will deal with all damage claims promptly. Where applicable, NIE Networks will pay compensation to landowners within four weeks of this being agreed.

Any land drains or culverts that NIE Networks or its contractors may damage during the works will be repaired. This will be done to at least the standard they were in prior to the damage occurring.

In the case of wayleave agreements, NIE Networks may also pay compensation. This will only happen if the new infrastructure has a recurring impact on agricultural activities. This is covered by the annual wayleave rent, further details of which are available on their website: **www.nienetworks.co.uk**. There are no recurring annual payments in the case of a grant of easement.



Our commitment

Landowners are critical in facilitating the electricity network across Northern Ireland. We can't secure the supply of electricity to customers without your co-operation and support.

We appreciate how important landowners are to us and to everyone who uses electricity. Your patience, flexibility and understanding help us to power Northern Ireland and it is never taken for granted.

We hope this guide gave you the information you need to understand what we do and how it affects landowners. We also hope you can see evidence of our primary goal which is to reach agreement before we do anything that may impact you.

Finally, this guide shows our efforts to maintain an open and transparent dialogue with landowners. Planning, developing and constructing new electricity transmission infrastructure can take significant time. That's why a good working relationship is essential. Both SONI and NIE Networks are committed to building and maintaining good relationships with landowners across Northern Ireland.



How to contact us

Safety

If an emergency involving electrical equipment occurs contact NIE Networks on **03457 643 643** (24 hours a day / seven days a week).

For more information visit: www.nienetworks.co.uk/safety

Pre-Construction Stage

Queries - SONI

If you have any questions that this guide does not answer, contact your SONI agricultural liaison officer.

Direct line: 028 90707844

Mobile: 07966 930844

E-mail: ALO@soni.ltd.uk

Alternatively, contact SONI directly on **028 907 94336**.

SONI is committed to engaging with all stakeholders in a courteous, clear, fair, accessible and respectful way. If we fall short, please tell us. We will then try to resolve the issue as fairly and quickly as possible.

For more information visit: www.soni.ltd.uk

Construction Stage

Queries - NIE Networks

Please call NIE Networks on **03457 643 643** if you have any questions or concerns about:

- Electric lines, cables or other equipment on your land.
- Location of equipment on your land, especially if you are planning any works or development on your land near to our equipment.
- Construction works on your land.

For more information visit: www.nienetworks.co.uk





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