



Mid Antrim Upgrade

Autumn/Winter 2022 Update



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.

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 in order to make it easier for renewable energy to move from where it is created in the North and West, 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’s 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 into urban areas

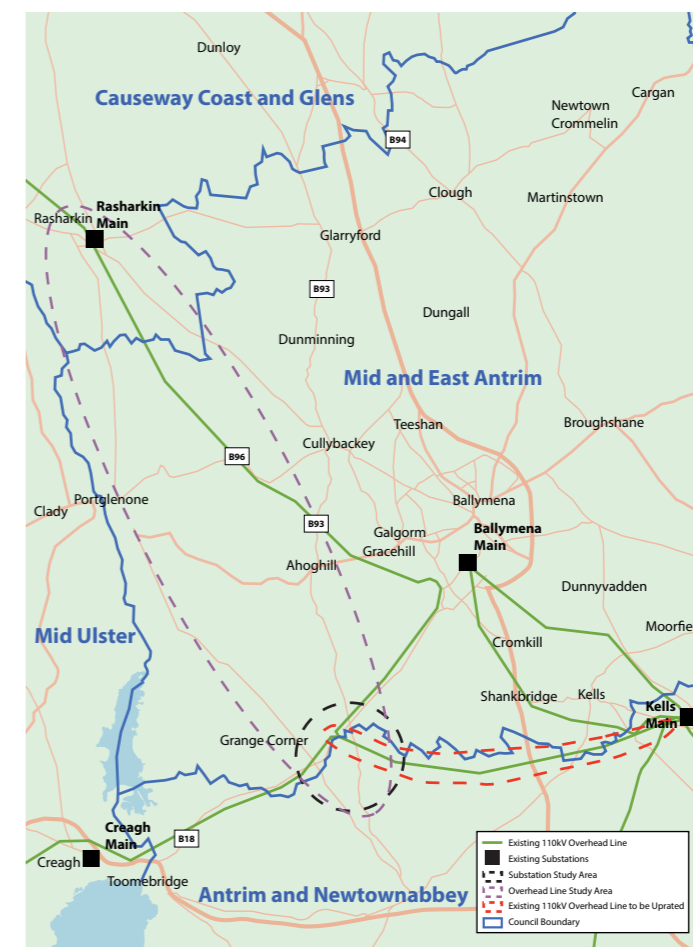
Renewable energy is central to delivering a clean, low carbon electricity system, which will support Northern Ireland’s clean electricity target of at least 80% renewable energy generation by 2030. We need to double the amount of renewable generation connected to the grid today by 2030, to meet the Northern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

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



Our three-part process

We're committed to gaining your input on any decisions we make on our investment projects. Our three-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



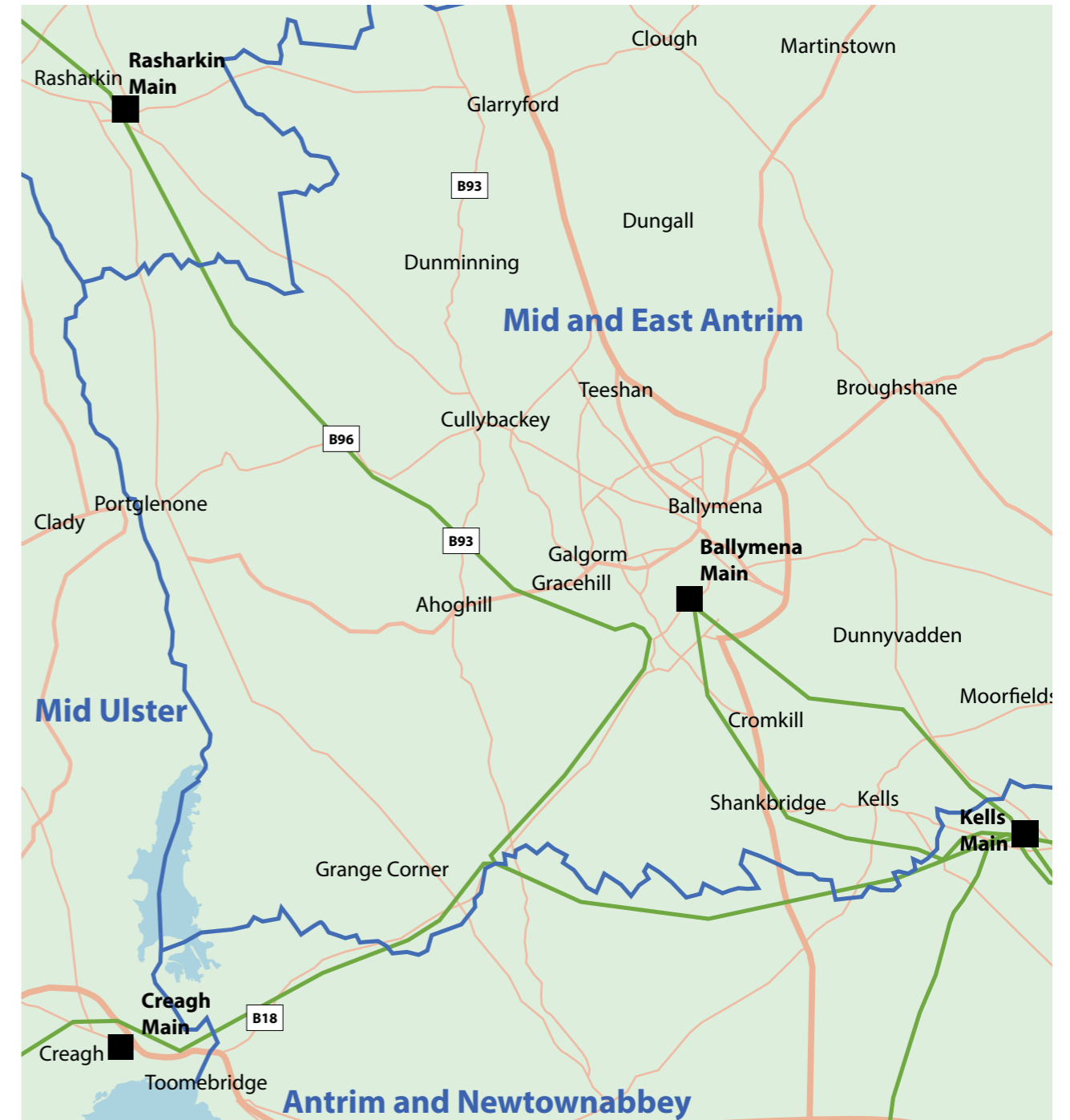
Part 1: Identifying the optimum solution and what area may be affected. When we have thoroughly researched the potential solutions, we'll have what we call **'a best performing technology solution'**. At this point we provide opportunities for you to have your say, before we finalise the solution and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

Part 2: Identifying where the project will be built. Once we've 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'll hand the project over for NIE Networks to construct and energise. We'll continue to engage with local communities and landowners in the vicinity of the project, and make sure everyone's kept informed.

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

What happened in part 1?



During part 1 of the project, we looked in detail at the area between Ballymena, Creagh, Kells and Rasharkin, and identified the best area for this new infrastructure to go, considering environmental, technical and economic factors.

Following engagement with local stakeholders and with NIE Networks, we've identified the best performing option as a new substation at Terrygowan, an upgrade of the Existing Double Circuit between Kells and Terrygowan (one side only) and a new overhead line between Terrygowan and Rasharkin.

What's happening next?

Part 2 of our 3-part process of Developing the Grid in Mid Antrim is to identify where the project will be built. We will identify:

- the location of the proposed new substation at Terrygowan
- the exact route of the new overhead line circuit, which is to be approximately 22km in length from the proposed substation in Terrygowan to Rasharkin. We're proposing to construct the new overhead line on mainly wooden poles with steel towers at challenging angles
- the exact route of the proposed undergrounding of cabling for entry into Rasharkin substation and undergrounding of cabling into the proposed station at Terrygowan substation, subject to the design and location of the substation

During this process, we'll 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 the process, we'll publish a consultation report.

How can I provide feedback to SONI?

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, Wednesday 16 November 2022 at the Ross Park Hotel, Ballymena, BT42 3LZ**
 - **2pm-7pm, Tuesday 22 November 2022 at The Bank, Portglenone, Portglenone, BT44 8HP**
 - **2pm-7pm, Tuesday 29 November 2022 at Rasharkin Community Centre, Ballymena, BT44 8RX**
- Email your submission to us at 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 <https://www.soni.ltd.uk/the-grid/projects/mid-antrim-upgrade/the-project/>

We welcome your feedback up until 12th of December 2022.

Community Forum and Citizen Sounding Board

We've appointed the public participation charity Involve to facilitate a two-part engagement process consisting of a Community Forum and a Citizen Sounding Board, to enable as diverse a group as possible to learn more about the upgrade and route options, and provide feedback that we can use when developing the preferred option for the upgrade.

The Community Forum is an opportunity for community representations to come together to build their understanding of the proposed route options, reflect the views of their organisation or community, and provide information or insights that may need to be taken into account during project delivery. If you're a member of a local community organisation, we'd like to invite you to express an interest in joining this group.

The Citizen Sounding Board will bring together a randomly selected group of people who live within the proposed area of the new overhead line and broadly represent the entire community. The people who attend learn about issues, discuss them with one another, and then make recommendations about what should happen and how things should change.

Find out more at www.sortitionfoundation.org/midantrim





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