



<b>Subject:</b>	<b>Response to SONI Consultation on Energising Belfast Project</b>
<b>Date:</b>	16th December, 2022
<b>Reporting Officer:</b>	John Tully, Director of City and Organisational Strategy
<b>Contact Officers:</b>	Debbie Caldwell, Belfast Climate Commissioner

<b>Restricted Reports</b>	
<b>Is this report restricted?</b>	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<b>If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?</b>	
<b>After Committee Decision</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>After Council Decision</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Sometime in the future</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<b>Never</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>

<b>Call-in</b>	
<b>Is the decision eligible for Call-in?</b>	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>

<b>1.0</b>	<b>Purpose of Report/Summary of Main Issues</b>
1.1	To update the Committee on SONI's consultation on Energising Belfast Project and present an officer submission for approval.
<b>2.0</b>	<b>Recommendations</b>
2.1	The Committee is requested to review the following officer submission to the SONI Energising Belfast Project, which has been forwarded to SONI on the understanding that Committee approval and Council ratification is required:
2.2	"Belfast City Council broadly welcomes the approach being taken by SONI within the Energising Belfast Project. The Council appreciates the efforts to minimise disruption to residents and businesses in Belfast.

2.3	<p>In relation to the benefits of the project, as set out in SONI plans, these align with both the Council's and the city ambitions to enhance resilience, to become net zero, while supporting economic development, as set out in the Belfast Agenda, the Belfast Resilience Strategy, the Belfast Net Zero Carbon Roadmap, Belfast Region City Deal and the Draft Belfast Economic Strategy.</p>
2.4	<p>The Council will develop a Belfast Local Area Energy Plan (LAEP) by the end of 2023. It would welcome SONI involvement in the LAEP process and alignment between SONI plans and those of the Council and city partners. The Council would welcome regular updates and meetings with SONI in relation to the Energising Belfast project so that officers and Elected Members can support local engagement and enhanced communication around this initiative and others.”</p>
<p><b>3.0 Main Report</b></p>	
3.1	<p>SONI is the electricity transmission system operator for Northern Ireland. SONI plans for the future of the electricity grid and operate it. This includes interconnecting to neighbouring grids and running the wholesale electricity market. The grid brings power from generators and sends it to NIE Networks. NIE then supplies electricity to every home, farm, community and business in Northern Ireland via its distribution network.</p>
3.2	<p>The Energising Belfast Project documentation describes the ambition to ensure that Belfast City Centre, its people and its businesses have the clean energy needed to grow. SONI states that ‘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 the Council's ‘Belfast Agenda’ to increase the employment and residential population in the city.’</p>
3.3	<p>The project aims to 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 is responsible for the design and securing planning consent and NIE Networks will lead on the construction phase of the project.</p>
3.4	<p>The project will deliver a new high-capacity underground cable in Belfast City Centre, as well as a new transformer at Castlereagh Main substation. SONI is also assessing the potential to build new substations at or next to existing sites in the city, or at new sites close by. This would mean that SONI 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.</p>

3.5	SONI has recently held consultation sessions in Belfast, more information on which can be found by clicking <a href="#">here</a> . This included a meeting on 14th September with the Council's Party Group Leaders to update them on the project. Feedback from that session has informed the Council's response.
	<b><u>Financial and Resource Implications</u></b>
3.6	None
	<b><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Implications</u></b>
3.7	None
<b>4.0</b>	<b>Documents Attached</b>
	None