

wenetwork



At NIE Networks, the last two years have been busy!

In 2017, we made ten promises to our customers which focused on their priorities for our business. The overarching aim is to provide a safe, reliable and value for money electricity network. Customers have also told us that they want improved service on power cuts, customer service and other issues such as the environment which are important to them.

So I hope that this short update will give you a flavour of some of the major projects that we have already undertaken and the ways that we are transforming our business to meet the needs of our current and future customers.

Paul Stapleton
Managing Director
NIE Networks

Keeping the power flowing

When developing our 2017 to 2024 plans for the electricity network, our customers told us that they found being without power, even for short periods, was frustrating and disruptive. They suggested that reducing power cuts was the most important improvement that we could make to our service.

So we've taken that on board. But we know that it would be impossible to stop power cuts completely. Particularly with a largely rural network which is two-thirds overhead lines and exposed to the elements. Keeping that in mind, we developed a two-pronged approach to react as quickly as possible when power cuts do happen but also to proactively manage parts of the network where we are seeing regular faults.

We are working to a number of ambitious targets to improve our service. In particular to reduce the number of minutes that customers are without power. In order to deliver these targets, our fault and emergency teams have reorganised their response on a geographical basis to make sure that resources are available on site quicker. Every second counts when working to tough response times and so the less travel time required the better.

Network engineers have also been carrying out detailed surveys on specific parts of the electricity network where there are higher than normal numbers of outages. These surveys highlight potential problem areas such as vegetation growing close to electricity lines or equipment problems. With this information, engineers are pulling together targeted plans for specific parts of the network. This information is then being shared with customers and maintenance work programmed.

This two-pronged approach has been in place for the last eighteen months and although there is a lot more work to do – we're starting to see results. We have improved our response time. We now have power restored to at least 90% of customers within three hours of a power cut happening. This is a three per cent improvement on our previous performance.

It's not just our response time, we are also making an improvement in our overall restoration standard with 99% of our customers now having power restored within 18 hours. Our previous target was based upon getting customer supplies restored with 24 hours. There are month to month variances in this performance but we're pleased to see an overall trend emerging of increased network reliability and an improvement in service for our customers.



Preparing for tomorrow's network

Our world is constantly changing and evolving.

Today, it is hard to think of a world without electricity. So it's difficult to believe that it is only 60 years since the major rural electrification programmes took place in Northern Ireland. Within that time short time it has become a critical part of how we power our homes and businesses, light our streets and charge our devices.

Keeping in mind therefore how quickly things change, at NIE Networks, we need to be continuously thinking about how Northern Ireland will continue to use and consume energy. The impact of climate change and the need for all societies to decarbonise are creating significant growth in Low Carbon Technologies such as electric vehicles, photovoltaic cells, heat pumps and battery storage. These upward trends impact on how energy is delivered and how electricity networks operate.

We are looking at how to optimise network management in order to meet the future energy needs of our customers and our evolution to a Distribution System Operator will help us achieve this.

The Northern Ireland electricity network, which was designed to facilitate the flow of electrical energy from a small number of generating sites towards the customer, is now experiencing significant energy

flows in the opposite direction. This change has happened due to customers generating electricity through renewable sources from over 20,000 generating locations.

Increasingly consumers have the ability to produce their own electricity and new technologies such as wind turbines, solar panels and electric vehicles, are giving consumers more control over how they use or trade electricity.

It seems clear from examples across Europe that the traditional network will evolve from a system of wires and cables to a platform facilitating many energy production technologies and a range of new products and services and we are watching this process carefully. Remaining conscious that there is no 'one size fits all' model of how we adapt our electricity system. We need to tailor how we work to the unique Northern Ireland network and for the Northern Ireland consumer.

This is an exciting time to get involved with shaping the future and we are keen to listen to our consumers and stakeholders on their key priorities for the future. There is lots more information on our website and we'd be really interested to hear your thoughts on our future. Get involved at nienetworks.co.uk/future-networks

Investing in Today's Network

NIE Networks' teams are working across Northern Ireland all day, every day.

We work with land owners to agree new infrastructure, cut vegetation away from overhead lines, read and update the electricity meters situated in homes and businesses and constantly monitor and maintain our substations.

Here's just a snapshot of major projects happening this month:

Coolkeeragh to Magherafelt overhead line survey

A £4 million project to determine the condition of the steelwork and foundations of the 56km overhead line which is a crucial link to the North-West. This is the first phase of a much bigger project to replace and strengthen this 275,000kV line.

Enniskillen Public Realm

A £1 million investment to lay approximately 7,000 metres of mains cable.

Belfast Cable Project

A £0.5 million investment to replace 3,000 metres of underground cable.

Newry Public Realm

A £0.3 million investment to replace 1800 metres of underground cable.

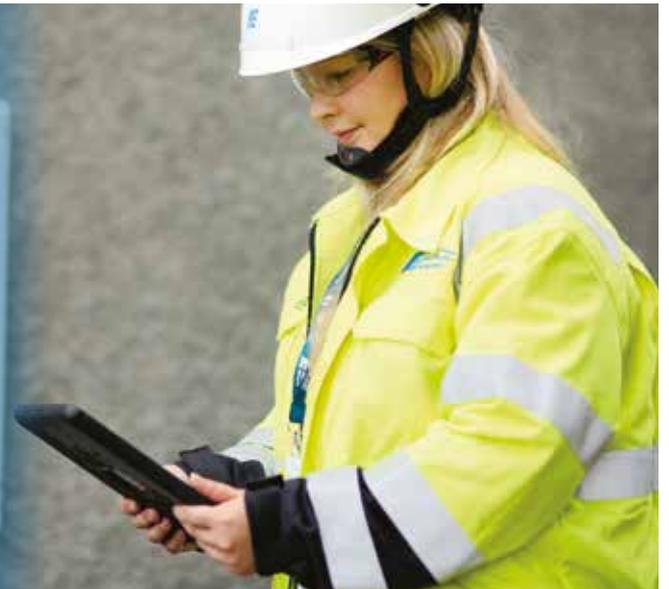
Our network promises for 2017-2024

At NIE Networks, we believe that all of our customers deserve excellent service. Over the coming years we will be striving to deliver the following ten promises to you:

1. We will deliver £55 million of efficiency savings and decrease customer costs
2. 90% of customers will have power restored within 3 hours
3. All customers will have power restored within 18 hours. Excluding severe weather events.
4. We will invest over £40 million every year to replace old or worn parts of the network
5. Customer and employee safety is essential. We will spend £60 million to reduce risk of interference or vandalism to the network
6. We are preparing for a low carbon future by trialling technologies that have the potential to further reduce costs in the long term.
7. We will answer 93% calls within 20 seconds and improve digital services so that customers can choose how they want to talk with us.
8. We will respond to 80% complaints within two days and 100% within five days
9. We will continue to minimise the impact of our business on the environment
10. We will continue to engage with and listen to the needs of our customers and stakeholders

Going mobile

At NIE Networks, we have committed to delivering £55 million of efficiency savings by 2024. We are determined that these savings should also bring benefits to our customers. As such, we have been focused on finding long term solutions to make our processes more efficient and therefore save money.



We believe that technology has to play a major part in how we move forward and as such have committed to creating a mobile workforce. We have rolled out digital devices to over 500 field employees who previously had no access to IT and were reliant on paper-based information and field files to carry out their work.

Today maps and network plans are

available at the fingertips of our fault & emergency teams and customer jobs are sent directly to our connections teams in the field. Dovetailing into this mobile approach, is investment in existing IT systems – such as the system we use to manage power cut repairs. We have recently upgraded it with the capability for our field engineers to input information

directly. Therefore speeding up the information going back to customers on the progress of their fault repair.

Information coming back from the field is then automatically updated on our Powercheck system that customers can check online and with our contact agents should customers prefer to call for an update.



Giving our customer more than Just A Minute

As the first utility in Northern Ireland to pledge to become JAM (Just A Minute) friendly, NIE Networks is proud to have taken its commitment to vulnerable customers one step further by sponsoring the production and delivery of 1,000 new JAM Cards.

The JAM Card scheme, run by local social enterprise NOW Group, helps improve interaction with individuals that have learning difficulties, autism or other barriers to communication. JAM Card users, who may require more time and patience, can present their plastic card or digital app to communicate discreetly with others, letting them know that they need 'Just A Minute'.



A visible difference in Safety

Have you noticed any changes to our electricity poles recently? We've initiated a programme to individually mark every pole in Northern Ireland with a bright yellow 'wrap around' which should help the public identify electricity poles from other poles in place around the country. One of our key ambitions is that we will have completed this programme by 2024.

We've also been contacting fishing clubs and offering free signage to help them advise fishermen of the constant need to look up and look out when casting close to electricity lines.

These are just a couple of examples of our wider public safety campaigns and the implementation of new government safety legislation on electricity infrastructure. These campaigns target contractors, farmers, school children and other groups which may come in contact with the electricity network. Between October 2017 and March 2019, we had spoken to over 15,000 people about safety around our networks.



Recognition for wildlife protection programme

NIE Networks has been awarded the Wildlife Aware accreditation by Ulster Wildlife following a major education programme on some of Northern Ireland's most protected biodiversity. This programme was designed to make the safeguarding of wildlife a priority and ensure that although the company has hundreds of employees working in the Northern Irish countryside every day, their work has minimal impact on the local landscape and natural habitats.

As part of the education programme, NIE Networks collaborated with Ulster Wildlife to develop a bespoke Wildlife Aware Guide to help them protect and identify wildlife and better understand the environment they come in contact with daily.

