

Electricity North West is the power operator for the North West. We are one of 14 distribution network operators in the UK regulated by Ofgem and the majority of electricity enters our network from the National Grid.

We are responsible for maintaining and upgrading 13,000 km of overhead power lines and more than 44,000 km of underground electricity cables and much more. This covers the diverse communities between the beautiful Lake District landscapes to the bustling city of Manchester and all the wonderful towns and villages located in-between.

Our network in the North West is one of the most reliable in the country and we are investing £2bn by the end of 2023 to ensure we continue to deliver an excellent, safe and affordable service to all our customers.

Essential to the operation of this network is our Telecommunications infrastructure where we install the most cost-effective communications medium to control our assets. Dependant on availability we use several different communications mediums including Fibre, copper and Radio. These assets are wholly owned by us, as third-party communications networks are unsuitable for our core networks.

At present we control the substation at Scout Moor using 1.4GHz microwave systems, located on a 15m monopole. This frequency was chosen because it enabled us in some locations to use smaller antennas while covering longer distances and over difficult ground conditions.

Unfortunately, OFCOM have given notice to revoke our point to point fixed link licences in the 1492 – 1517 MHz band (“1.4 GHz licences”) on 31 December 2022 for the purpose of securing compliance with an international obligation of the United Kingdom (“May 2019 Notice”).²

The utility companies have spent several months challenging this decision stating the following in its objection: -

The proposal provides no insight into its effect on our operational network, these include: -

- Inability to manage and effectively Control the Electricity Network assets thus failing a directive to maintain electricity supplies to customers.
- Inability to meet Statutory and License obligations in service restoration.
- Failure of electrical feeder Safety Protection Equipment.
- Substantial customer Interruptions and 'Customer Minutes Lost' penalties from OFGEM.
- Placing Electricity North West Limited's license to operate at risk.
- Places personnel and plant at risk of potential Failure and Injury or damage

The operation of ENW infrastructure is in line with the government's own definition of CNI

<https://www.cpni.gov.uk/critical-national-infrastructure-0>

The UK government's official definition of CNI is:

‘Those critical elements of infrastructure (namely assets, facilities, systems, networks or processes and the essential workers that operate and facilitate them), the loss or compromise of which could result in:

a) Major detrimental impact on the availability, integrity or delivery of essential services – including those services whose integrity, if compromised, could result in significant loss of life or casualties – taking into account significant economic or social impacts; and/or

b) Significant impact on national security, national defence, or the functioning of the state.’

The suitability of 1.4GHz spectrum cannot be overemphasised, the OFCOM proposal to remove this spectrum within 3.5 years ignores the impact on the ENW business and its customers.

The resulting stay of execution dictated that all 1.4 GHz links are removed from the band no later than 30 April 2024.

The resultant elimination of 1.4GHz frequency requires alternative frequency bands must be used, these alternatives have different propagation characteristics resulting in the requirement for larger antennas to be used.

This radio system at Scout Moor operates at 1.4GHz connecting into our network at a site located in Tottington. However, the radio path from Tottington to Scout Moor will not operate directly over the radio path on the frequencies available to us now the 1.4Ghz cannot be used. The proposed 10m Monopole structure is a relay site which provides an intervening radio path and eliminates the issues caused by the operation of these alternative frequency bands.

² The international obligation we refer to is [European Commission Implementing Decision 2015/750 of 8 May 2015 on the harmonisation of the 1452-1492 MHz frequency band for terrestrial systems capable of providing electronic communications services in the Union](#), as amended by [European Commission Implementing Decision 2018/661 of 26 April 2018 harmonising the 1492 – 1517 MHz band for downlink-only wireless broadband electronic communications services on an EU wide basis](#) (the “EC Decision”).