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By Email Only: Eimear.Watson@soni.ltd.uk

Date: 16 July 2025

Our Ref: NET/E/BM/1278

Dear Eimear,

Request for Authority's consent to Extend Section S Offer Timelines for an Increased Capacity of 81MW (Via a Second Transformer) at Rasharkin Cluster

Thank you for your letter received 2 July 2025 (the **Letter**) setting out an application **(the Application)** made under Condition 25(5) of SONI's Transmission Licence ("the Licence") - seeking the Authority's consent for the extension of the period for the making of a (Section S)¹ Connection Offer to NIE Networks, (as Distribution Network Owner - DNO).

1. Condition 25 of the Licence.

Section S of the Transmission Interface Agreement (TIA) requires NIE Networks to submit an application to SONI to provide any necessary transmission works, when a person has applied to NIE Networks to connect to the Distribution System, and in the view of NIE Networks this may require a Construction Project were it to proceed. In parallel to the Section S connection offer process, SONI has made a Construction Project application to NIE Networks under Condition 25 (2) of the SONI Transmission System Operator Licence.

¹ Of the Transmission Interface Arrangement (TIA).

Condition 25(5) provides, so far as relevant, as follows (our underlining added):

“[SONI] shall offer terms for [connection agreements] . . . as soon as practicable and (save where the Authority consents to a longer period, which consent may be given on the application of [SONI] following consultation by [SONI] with the person making the application and such other persons as [SONI] considers may be affected or interested) in any event not more than the period specified in paragraph 7 after receipt by [SONI] of an application containing all such information as [SONI] may reasonably require for the purpose of formulating the terms of the offer . . .”

Condition 25(7) provides that the “*period specified*” in this case is three months, unless the Authority has consented to a longer period.

2. Background

The application (by NIE Networks), for a Section S Connection Offer, was deemed effective by SONI on 17 April 2025, with SONI stating it has until 16 July 2025 to make a Connection Offer.

SONI states in the application that there has been a recent influx of connection applications/Section S applications received, with nine deemed effective in the past four months, and four currently live. SONI identifies that, due to a lack of capacity on the Transmission System, each of these applications requires technically complex work to identify the Least Cost Technically Acceptable (LCTA) connection arrangement. This involves deployment of personnel over multiple areas, including contractual, technical, infrastructure, legal and regulation. Final arrangements would also have to be signed off in line with SONI’s Delegated Control Framework.

SONI states that the high volume of technically complex applications means ‘it is not possible’ for SONI to process connection applications and Section S Applications within statutory timelines.

3. The Application

SONI is applying for an extension of the Condition 25 period for the making of the Section S Connection Offer, from 16 July 2025 to 25 July 2025, because of the difficulty in processing the number of these technically complex applications to the required level of quality control SONI require, to issue the Connection Offer within the statutory timelines.

SONI comments that, if this application is not granted, then SONI would, not be capable of issuing a connection offer by 16 July 2025 and, *“would likely have to refuse to make the Section S Offer under Condition 25 (6) of the Licence,”* as SONI’s initial consideration has concluded that there are no alternative actions that would facilitate a Section S Connection Offer to be issued by 16 July 2025.

4. Consultation associated with the Application

An application by SONI under Condition 25(5) requires SONI to consult with *“...the person making the application for connection, and such other persons as [SONI] considers may be affected or interested.”*

SONI has identified affected parties as NIE Networks. NIE Networks (as DNO) is the applicant in respect of which the Section S connection request has been made. NIE Networks (as Transmission Owner - TO) is affected or interested, with respect to the Construction Project application and offer process under the TIA.

Consultation with the Connection Applicant

SONI sent an email consulting NIE Networks on the decision to apply for extension, on 1 July 2025. NIE Networks replied via email of 2 July 2025, supporting the application, stating:

“I can confirm that NIE are in support of these extensions in principle. However as these Section S offers are critical in releasing much needed capacity onto the network I would ask SONI to not treat these extension dates as a target and endeavour to progress these offers earlier than the dates provided.”

5. The Authority's decision

We judge the Application against: (i) our principal objective and general duties set out in Article 12 of the Energy (NI) Order 2003; and (ii) the published Decision Paper Guidance.² We consider the Application to have been made in accordance with the Decision Paper Guidance.

Our decision is to:

- (i) accede to the Application considering it properly founded; and (accordingly)
- (ii) give consent to an extension to 25 July 2025 for the purposes of Condition 25(5) as regards the connection application for a Section S connection offer, concerning 81MW increased capacity at Rasharkin Cluster.

In making this decision we have had proper and full regard to the consultation responses from the NIE Networks, and note it supported the application for extension. We note that NIE Networks has said that SONI should endeavour to progress the offer earlier than the end of the extended period, and welcome that SONI has stated in the application that it will endeavour to issue the Section S Offer as soon as practicable.

The Authority is satisfied that we should grant the Application based on the volume and technical complexity of the applications made.

However, we should remind SONI that the grant of consent (for an extension of time) relayed in this letter does not absolve SONI of its Condition 25 obligation to make a connection offer to the Connection Applicant as soon as practicable. The newly substituted Condition 25 period does not affect that key licence obligation.

This decision shall be published and placed in the Electricity Register.

We trust this is satisfactory. If you have any queries, please contact Jody O'Boyle.

² [Electricity Connections Decision FINAL.pdf \(uregni.gov.uk\)](#).

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'B Mulhern', is shown on a light grey rectangular background.

Brian Mulhern

Director of Networks and Energy Futures
Duly authorised by the Authority