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

Date: 19 December 2025

Our Ref: NET/E/JF/1408

Dear Eimear,

Request for Authority's consent to Extend the Connection Offer Timelines for the Dromore Synchronous Condenser at Western Grid Services Limited (MIC = 6 MW; Inertia 2100 MWs).

Thank you for your letter received 17 December 2025 (the **Letter**) setting out an application (**the Application**) made under Condition 25(5) of SONI's Transmission Licence ("the Licence") - seeking the Authority's¹ consent for the extension of the period for the making of an offer by SONI to a Connection Applicant, for the connection of the Synchronous Condenser at Western Grid Services Limited (MIC= 6 MW; Inertia 2100 MWs) to the Northern Ireland Transmission System.

We start by setting out the relevant terms of Condition 25 of the Licence. We then move to the Application:

1. Condition 25 of the Licence.

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

¹ In this correspondence we use the words "us" "we" "our" "UR" "Utility Regulator" and "Authority" interchangeably to refer to the Northern Ireland Authority for Utility Regulation.

“[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 the Connection Applicant) for the connection of the Dromore Synchronous Condenser at Western Grid Services Limited, was deemed effective by SONI on 30 September 2025, with SONI stating it has until 29 December 2025 to make a Connection Offer.

SONI states in the application that, *“With pre-planned Christmas leave in place it will not be possible for SONI to deliver the required level of quality control to allow a Connection Offer to be issued on 29th December.”* This was further explained with the connection process requiring input from NIE Networks in terms of the best option for connection, focusing on both the LCTA (Least Cost Technically Acceptable) and the System Operator Preferred solution.

3. The Application

SONI is applying for an extension of the Condition 25 period for the making of the Connection Offer from 29 December 2025 to 16 January 2026.

SONI comments in the application that, *“The issuance of a Connection Offer requires input throughout SONI from the various contractual, technical, infrastructure, legal and regulation teams, along with internal sign off in line with our Delegated Control framework (DCF).”*

SONI referenced that this process may also require further approaches to NIE Networks for clarification and possible input from third parties, which SONI states will not be possible with pre-planned Christmas leave commencing.

The UR have since been in contact with SONI in which we enquired if there had been any further information regarding the application before we allocated for decision maker consideration.

On 17 December 2025 SONI later issued further reasoning to the Authority, focusing on its ability to deem the connection offer effective and what is currently preventing this. SONI stated that, in the Construction Offer from NIE Networks, *“In one case a cable route has been changed from that proposed in the Construction Application made by SONI to the TO (Transmission Owner). We need to fully understand the reasoning for this as it appears to compromise the most efficient and economic method of developing a 275 kV substation at Dromore.”* SONI highlighted that it is also taking into consideration the TO’s response to this.

Another point mentioned by SONI is the recent increase in costs for the TO [REDACTED] and that regardless of previous caveats for price risks, additional time is required to best incorporate the new approach from the TO, focusing on both the identification of the LCTA and looking into a System Operator Preferred solution. SONI also noted their concerns over any potential impact the Connection Arrangements in the TO construction offer could have on the proposed Dromore 275 kV substation project. A project which is critical for facilitating a significant increase in capacity in the transmission system to support the transition to net zero. The proposed extension would allow SONI to address such concerns.

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.”*

Consultation with the Connection Applicant

SONI sent consultation to the Connection Applicant on the decision to apply for extension via email, on 26 November 2025. The Connection Applicant responded via email on 27 November 2025 stating, *“we confirm that SONI’s request below to extend the offer issuance date for the Dromore [sic] is acceptable.”*

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.

We note that as a principle we consider justifications such as “leave” or “insufficient management time” or “manpower shortages” are not an adequate response for a licensee to not fulfil its duties under its requirements, however the Authority has taken into account SONI’s additional rationale provided, which focused on the need for further confirmation needed from the TO, on the preferred approach.

Our decision is to:

- (i) accede to the Application considering it properly founded; and (accordingly)
- (ii) give consent to an extension to 16 January 2026 for the purposes of Condition 25(5) as regards the Connection Application made by the Connection Applicant for the connection of the Dromore Synchronous Condenser at Western Grid Services Limited (MIC = 6 MW; Inertia 2100 MWs).

In making this decision we have had proper and full regard to the consultation responses from the Connection Applicant.

The Authority is satisfied that we should grant the Application based on the reasons set out in the Application.

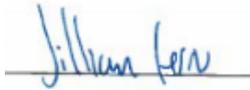
We also remind SONI that the grant of consent (for an extension of time) relayed in this letter does not absolve SONI of its Condition 25 obligation to make a connection offer to the Connection Applicant as soon as practicable. The newly substituted Condition 25 period does not affect that key licence obligation. SONI should particularly consider if any of the other potential options for connection would allow for the making of a connection offer, earlier than 16 January 2026.

² [Electricity Connections Decision FINAL.pdf \(uregni.gov.uk\)](https://www.uregni.gov.uk/decisions/2025/2025-001-connection-decision-final).

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.

Yours sincerely,



Jillian Ferris
Head of Networks
Duly authorised by the Authority