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

Date: 03 August 2026

Our Ref: NET/E/JF/1504

Dear Eimear,

Request for Authority's consent to extend the Connection Offer timeline for Heron Storage Limited's Carrick Connect BESS Project (MEC – 500 MW / MIC = 500 MW)

Thank you for your letter received 22 July 2026 (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 a (MEC (Maximum Export Capacity) – 500 MW / MIC(Maximum Import Capacity) = 500 MW) BESS (Battery Energy Storage System) project at Carrick Connect 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): "[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

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.

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 initial application (by the Connection Applicant) for the connection of the Carrick Connect BESS Project – a battery energy storage system (“**BESS**”) project with a MEC of 500 MW and a MIC of 500 MW, had been received by SONI on 10 December 2025, this was then deemed effective on 7 May 2026, with SONI stating it has until 5 August 2026 to make a Connection Offer. The Application provides some background details on the Connection arrangement to be provided within the offer.

The Application refers to SONI stating “*Kilroot substation does not at this stage have sufficient bays and cannot be extended.*” It additionally states, “*there are also multiple active connection applications in the immediate area.*” The latest programme assumption SONI has given for the Transmission Network Pre-Construction Project (TNPP) process submission to the UR for review is by March 2027.

SONI has stated that the JPMO (Joint Programme Management Office), which is a joint function operated by SONI and NIE Networks to oversee and coordinate transmission network infrastructure projects, has advised on the uncertainty classification that should be applied to the estimated timelines. They also state “*it has been classified in the high uncertainty category and as such an uplift of 50% has been added to the timeline in line with the HM Treasury’s Green Book.*”

SONI is therefore requesting an extension of the Carrick Connect BESS connection offer date from **5 August 2026** to **30 April 2028**. SONI believes that the request is reasonable and proportionate based on the latest Kilroot 275 kV Development programme assumptions, recognising the interactive offer sequencing risk, and alignment with the risk-adjusted position used for other Kilroot-dependent offers.

3. The Application

SONI is applying for an extension of the Condition 25 period for the making of the Connection Offer, from **5 August 2026** to **30 April 2028**.

As stated above the application notes that the project has been impacted by Kilroot substation, which does not have sufficient bays and cannot be extended. SONI states that *“Until that work is sufficiently developed, SONI cannot finalise Connection Offer terms.”* SONI further adds there are multiple active connection applications in the immediate area, and the least cost technically acceptable (LCTA) solution must take that into account.

As a result, SONI has stated they are *“developing a broader proposal that will accommodate all the requirements. This will include connection assets and system assets. The connection assets would be chargeable to the respective parties, with the system assets requiring regulatory approval through the Transmission Network Pre-Construction Project (TNPP) process.”* SONI’s *“latest programme assumption is that TNPP submission will be completed by March 2027.”*

SONI’s extension application is based on *“the latest programme assumptions: TNPP submission by March 2027; development of a simultaneous charging and offer progression strategy by May 2027; completion of the Connection Offer process, including studies, construction application and NIEN Construction Offer, by August 2027; and a 50% programme risk allowance proportionate to the risks associated with this project.”*

SONI has additionally *“considered whether there are any alternative actions that could allow SONI to issue the Connection Offer to the customer on or before the 5 August 2026. SONI has concluded that there are no such actions.”* Without an extension *“SONI would not be able to issue a connection offer to the customer within the statutory timelines which is in line with Condition 20 of our licence.”*

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 consulted with the Connection Applicant and NIE Networks.

Consultation with the Connection Applicant

SONI sent an email consulting the Connection Applicant on the decision to apply for extension, at the time of drafting the applicant had not yet responded to the email on the decision to apply for an extension.

Also, on 20 July 2026 SONI consulted NIE Networks (as the Transmission Owner) on the decision to apply for extension via email. At the time SONI submitted the request to us on the 22 July 2026, NIE Networks had not responded to SONI email from the previous day.

We followed up with SONI on the 28 July 2026 on responses, and SONI indicated on the 28 July 2026 that they had not received any further responses from Heron Storage Limited or NIE Networks. At the time of making this decision I have not received or reviewed any further responses.

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.

Having considered the matter fully as a request under Condition 25 of SONI's Transmission Licence and taken all relevant matters into account, the Authority:

- (i) accede to the Application considering it properly founded; and (accordingly)
- (ii) give consent to an extension to 30 April 2028 for the purposes of Condition 25(5) as regards the Connection Application made by the Connection Applicant for the connection of Carrick Connect BESS project with a MEC of 500MW and a MIC of 500mw.

In making this decision we have had proper regard to the consultation undertaken by SONI in accordance with Condition 25(5).

² [Electricity Connections Decision FINAL.pdf \(uregni.gov.uk\)](https://www.uregni.gov.uk/Electricity%20Connections%20Decision%20FINAL.pdf).

Having considered the submission and recognising that further development is needed to the Kilroot substation to accommodate future connections we consider that additional time is warranted.

We do have some concerns where SONI states its latest programme assumption is that the TNPP submission will be completed by March 2027. While we accept that SONI still has to complete the optioneering for Kilroot Transmission Substation and finalise the preparation of TNPP submission, we are aware that the optioneering has been underway for some time already.

We would hope that this TNPP submission could be submitted sooner, given the importance of this development. However, the Authority is satisfied that we should grant the Application based on the reasons set out in the Application.

We 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.

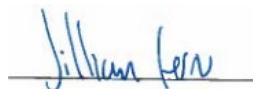
The newly substituted Condition 25 period does not affect that key licence obligation. SONI should particularly consider if any of the other potential options for connection would allow for the making of a connection offer earlier than 30 April 2028.

We also encourage SONI to continue to engage with the applicant in a meaningful manner and to update estimated timelines when more relevant information enables it to do so.

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