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

Date: 17 August 2026

Our Ref: NET/E/JF/1510

Dear Eimear,

Request for Authority's consent to extend the Connection Offer timeline for Prime Power Generation Ltd.'s CCGT Project (MEC = 480 MW)

Thank you for your letter received **03 August 2026 ("the Letter")** setting out an 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 Prime Power Generation Ltd 480 MW Combined Cycle Gas Turbine ("**CCGT**") to the Transmission system.

This application follows a previous application for extension of a connection offer timeline, which was approved by the Authority on 13 June 2024². We therefore refer to the March 2024 application as the "**First Application**" and will refer to the August 2026 application as the "**Second Application**".

SONI is now seeking an extension of the **Prime Power Generation Ltd.'s CCGT Project** connection offer date from **17 August 2026** to **30 October 2028**.

We start by setting out the relevant terms of Condition 25 of the Licence, we then will move to the Second Application.

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.

² https://www.uregni.gov.uk/files/uregni/documents/2024-07/2024.06.13%20C25%20SONI%20Prime%20Power%20Extension%20Decision_0.pdf

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 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 First Application (by the Connection Applicant) for the connection of the 480 MW CCGT, was made to SONI on 29 February 2024. SONI deemed the application effective on 19 March 2024, under the licence requirements, the applicant should have been provided an offer on 17 June 2024, but in May 2024 SONI requested an extension to 17 August 2026 to make a Connection Offer. SONI's rationale for this request concerned the need for rebuild at Castlereagh Substation, and an associated Transmission Network Pre-Construction Project (TNPP).

We approved the **“First Application”** extension request on 13 June 2024 and gave consent to an extension to 17 August 2026 for the purposes of Condition 25(5) as regards the Connection Application made by the Connection Applicant for the connection of the Prime Power Generation Ltd's CCGT Project.

3. The Application

SONI have requested that this date is further extended from **17 August 2026** to **30 October 2028**. This would represent a further extension of approximately 26 months and an overall extension period of circa 52 months.

SONI's rationale for this request concerns the consideration of two potential Connection arrangements, being (i) Castlereagh Substation, and (ii) Kilroot substation. The **“Second Application”** provides some details on the potential Connection arrangement that may be provided within any offer.

SONI states that, “there are two potential connection options for the project, Castlereagh and Kilroot,” and that, “the delivery of the Connection Offer is therefore dependent on either the Castlereagh 275 kV Rebuild project or as

part of a number of other connections, to a new Kilroot Transmission Substation, either of which is critical to enabling the connection". SONI further provides that, "based on the latest programme information, the Castlereagh constraint is the longer of the two dependencies and is therefore treated as the primary constraint for the purposes of this extension request while the LCTA remains unconfirmed." SONI outlines the extension period as detailed below:

"TNPP submission for the Castlereagh 275 kV Rebuild - to May 2027.

TNPP approval for the Castlereagh 275 kV Rebuild - to September 2027.

Finalise design of connection - to December 2027.

Preparation of Connection Offer and Construction Application to NIE Networks - December 2027 to March 2028.

50% risk adjustment applied to the TNPP timeline - risk-adjusted offer issue date October 2028."

In the Second Application, SONI states that they have been, "progressing assessment of potential connection options, including connection into a new substation in the vicinity of Kilroot via a submarine cable and connection into the Castlereagh 275 kV Rebuild." SONI states, "significant work has been carried out on both of the options; the Least Cost Technically Acceptable solution has not yet been finalised, and further time is required to process the Connection Offer as set out in this extension request."

SONI also noted, "the potential cable route to Castlereagh may require further engagement with the Department for Infrastructure where works could affect the A55 Out Ring. Previous assessment indicated that works on this route could be highly disruptive and may require additional approvals, and further assessment is therefore required to confirm the viability and deliverability of the route as part of the wider Castlereagh option."

Additionally, SONI addresses the Kilroot option stating, the Kilroot option also remains technically complex, as it may require a submarine or horizontal directed drilled cable route, including assessment of Belfast Lough constraints, shoreline landing requirements, seabed conditions and other obstacles. Any Kilroot-based transmission development would also need to be considered alongside other connection applications in that area. "

SONI is therefore requesting a further extension of the Prime Power Generation Ltd.'s CCGT Connection Offer date from 17 August 2026 to 30 October 2028.

SONI considers that the requested date is, *“reasonable and proportionate because it is based on the latest programme assumptions for the relevant Transmission dependencies and reflects the high level of uncertainty associated with the approvals of the enabling works required to progress the Connection Offer.”*

SONI concludes that they have, *“considered whether there are any alternative actions that could allow SONI to issue the Connection Offer to the Customer on or before the 17 August 2026. SONI has concluded that there are no such actions.”*

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

On 31 July 2026, SONI sent an email consulting the Connection Applicant in relation to the decision to apply for extension. Within the Second Application, SONI have stated that, *“SONI has not received Customers response”*. We followed up with SONI on the 04 and 13 August 2026, and at that time, SONI indicated that they had not received any further responses from the applicant.

SONI further informed us, on 14/08/2026, that the Connection Applicant indicated that they would provide a response by close of business on 14/08/2026, unfortunately at the time of making this decision (17/08/2026), we have not received nor reviewed this response from the Connection Applicant.

Consultation with the NIE Networks

On 31 July 2026, SONI consulted NIE Networks (as the Transmission Owner) via email in relation to the decision to apply for extension. NIE Networks confirmed on 03 August 2026 that they had no objections to SONI's proposed application.

5. The Authority's decision

We judge the Second 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.³ We consider the Second 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) accedes to the Second Application considering it properly founded, [subject to reservations in relation to the proposed extension date]; and (accordingly)
- (ii) gives consent to an extension to **30 March 2028** (not 30 October 2028) for the purposes of Condition 25(5) as regards the Connection Application made by the Connection Applicant for the connection of Prime Power Generation Ltd.'s CCGT Project (MEC = 480MW)

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

We have considered the Second Application and acknowledge that further development is needed either to the Castlereagh 275 kV rebuild project or as part of several other connections to a new Kilroot Transmission Substation. SONI have informed us that, *"either of which is critical to enabling the connection."*

We note and have concerns around the length of time taken to prepare TNPP submissions and we would hope that this TNPP submission could be submitted sooner, given the importance of this development. [As noted within our Decision Paper Guidance, we must consider each case on its merits and be satisfied that the reasons for the request justify the grant of an extension.

We also note that, within the Second Application, SONI's latest programme information provides that the Connection offer would be prepared between December 2027 and March 2028. Based upon the information provided within the Second Application, we are not fully satisfied that the "50% risk adjustment applied to the TNPP timeline" justifies the additional seven month extension which would bring the extension date to October 2028. Therefore, based upon the programme information provided within the

³ [Electricity Connections Decision FINAL.pdf \(uregni.gov.uk\)](#).

Second Application, we are content to approve an extension up to 30 March 2028.

We also note that in response to the First Application the connected applicant stated they were “sympathetic” to the technical complexities of preparing the connection offer, and in our decision letter of the 13 June 2024 we requested that the Authority is also kept informed as this programme of work progresses.

We are not aware of SONI providing any formal updates regarding the programme of works prior to the Second Application request. We would request that the Authority is kept informed of any future changes to the programme.

However, the Authority, based on the information provided and the need to progress a viable option for connection, is satisfied that we should grant the Second Application, [with an extension date of 30 March 2028 as opposed to 30 October 2028,] based on the reasons set out in the Second 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 30 March 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,



Head of Networks
Duly authorised by the Authority