

**Mr Ronan McKeown**

Electricity Branch

Utility Regulator

Queens House

14 Queens Street

Belfast

**BT1 6ER**

19<sup>th</sup> January 2015

**Consultation on the introduction of Contestability in Connections:**

**Response to UREG:**

Dear Mr McKeown,

Windyfields would like to take this opportunity to respond to the above consultation. We feel that contestability in connections should be available to developers in Northern Ireland, not least because it is already available in RoI and GB, and the associated procedures and technical requirements have been well established and set down. We feel that these can be extended to Northern Ireland as soon as possible with minimal additional work.

We feel that contestability can bring significant benefits to developers, network operators and customers as well as increasing the rate of on-shore wind farm build-out which is required to achieve the Assembly targets in respect of renewable energy.

Given the current delays in the planning and authorisation process for on-shore wind and the uncertainties which have been introduced through EMR and i-SEM, it is essential that the construction and the commissioning of wind farms is completed as expeditiously as possible .

Further, we feel that the lack of contestable grid connection has significant negative impacts including, curtailment of the ability of wind energy to reduce wholesale electricity prices in the SEM, failure to reach the DETI/Assembly 40% 2020 target and lost opportunities for local communities in Northern Ireland in respect of employment, community benefit funds and commercial rates income.

Please find attached an Excel table with an annotated response to the questions in the Consultation Document.

Yours sincerely,

**Jeff Potter**

**CEO**

## Consultation on the Introduction of Contestability in Connections

by Utility Regulator

Issued: 02/12/2014  
Reply to NIRIG by: 16/01/2015  
NIAUR Workshop 28/01/2015  
Consultation Response: 27/02/2015

### **Windyfields Response**

Local Factors for Consideration (Section 4)	Question 1	Are there any other factors in Northern Ireland not discussed in Section 4 that should be taken into consideration when implementing Contestability?	Section 4.1.2 wayleave legislation only needs to be updated if compulsory powers for wayleaves and access are to be extended to third parties. Obtaining wayleaves and access rights through agreement with landowners should be contestable immediately without changes to legislation. Legislative changes if considered necessary could occur after the initial introduction of contestability and should not be used to delay its introduction.
Other Jurisdictions (Section 5)	Question 2	From the Models highlighted in RoI and GB (Section 5), which do you think would present the best option for NI and why?	Based on industry experience, Windyfields believe the model currently in use in ROI would work effectively in NI. The GB approach of allowing contestable commissioning, ownership and O&M could perhaps also be incorporated at some point in the future. That said, we believe either approach could be made to work. If NIAUR believed that for legislative reasons, the GB approach could be introduced more readily, then we would be happy to support this.
Ofgem Review (Section 6)	Question 3	From the issues highlighted in Ofgem's review (Section 6), are there any that cause a significant threat to contestability being successful in NI?	None cause a significant threat to the introduction of contestability.
Response to Call for Evidence (Section 7)	Question 4	Is there any documentation that has been missed from the list detailed in 7.11.1?	No
	Question 5	Are there any other non-contestable works that are not outlined in 7.12 that should be considered?	No
	Question 6	Do you agree with the approach described in 7.13.1?	Currently in NI developers have a choice of having O&M charges capitalised as part of the connection costs or charged on an annual basis. We assume this will continue to be the case with the O&M fee for assets constructed contestably and handed over to the DNO.
Key decisions for consideration (Section 8)	Question 7	Should the connecting party be allowed to choose what contestable elements they wish to undertake?	Yes. This should however be balanced with the need to keep the interface between the developer and DNO / TSO as clear and simple as possible.
	Question 8	Are there any further policy considerations that have not been considered in 8.1?	No
	Question 9	Are there any further practical considerations that have not been considered in 8.2?	No
	Question 10	<i>Are there any further issues around contestability not addressed in this consultation?</i>	We are keen to see the introduction of contestability as soon as possible and we would be keen to see a worked through framework from UREG/NIE/SONI and an associated timescale for implementation in or before Q2 2015.