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Ronan McKeown
Utility Regulator
Queens House
14 Queens Street
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Our Ref: EN01-005146

19 June 2015

Dear Ronan,

Re: RES Response to Contestability in Connections Consultation

RES is the UK's largest independent renewable energy developer with interests in onshore wind, wave and tidal, offshore, solar, energy storage and demand-side response. A wholly owned UK company at the forefront of innovation and infrastructure development around the world, RES now employs over 1000 people and has built over 1000MW of wind energy assets in the UK – around 10% of the UK's total installed capacity.

Since developing our first onshore wind farm in Northern Ireland in the early 1990s, RES has subsequently developed and/or constructed 16 onshore wind farms totalling 229MW. This equates to 36% of Northern Ireland's onshore wind capacity. RES currently operates over 83MW of wind capacity across Northern Ireland, has secured planning permission for a further 112MW awaiting construction and has 56MW in the planning system.

RES welcomes the proposals made in the Contestability in Connections consultation document of 11 May 2015 ("the consultation") and continues to support the introduction of contestability in connections in Northern Ireland in the timeliest manner practicable. The proposed timeline set down in Annex 1 is noted but RES would encourage all stakeholders to maintain pressure on the workplan with a view to future acceleration.

RES notes the proposed scope of contestability outlined in Section 4 of the consultation but also notes that UREGNI will keep this under review. As a first step, RES supports this approach but would also point out that some aspects of the non-contestable scope are soon to be categorised as contestable in the GB market. Such activities include definition of point of connection, design of point of connection and design approvals. RES would encourage UREGNI to monitor progress of these initiatives in GB with a view to their future introduction to contestability in Northern Ireland. RES also notes that development of the GB process also

includes the initial offering of both contestable and 'all works' quotes at the same time by system operators, thereby making users more aware of their option to pursue a contestable connection and not penalising them by re-starting processes if subsequently a contestable option is preferred.

RES has the following specific comments:

- Section 4 Scope of Contestability: RES agrees with the suggested split of contestable and non-contestable activities, but would note that there needs to be a common sense approach to commissioning versus pre-commissioning. RES believes it is in the interests of efficient, timely project delivery and development of new resources, to maximise the extent of the pre-commissioning activities within the contestable works. RES understands that system operators will need to complete 'whole scheme' and pre-energisation commissioning, but would hope that this does not duplicate activities carried out during pre-commissioning.

In general RES supports an appropriate inspection and monitoring regime, but would be keen to understand the detail of any proposed arrangements. In particular RES would be keen to ensure that any scheme is not administratively onerous and is transparent in terms of charging and rationale. Any regime must be justified with comparison to the inspection and monitoring that is applied under current business as usual.

RES supports the inclusion of planning and wayleaves within the scope of contestability but would highlight that, in the GB market, this has given rise to unforeseen consequences that discriminate against projects seeking to use an ICP for the delivery of a contestable connections. These unforeseen consequences include complications in the consenting process relative to the process that is followed by the host DNO. RES would also highlight that, in the context of pending EMR Contracts for Difference (CFD) regime the wording of the CFD allocation rules have resulted in renewable projects that are planning to use an ICP to deliver a contestable connection potentially being required to secure all consents for their connection in order to be eligible to participate in a CfD auction. In developing contestability arrangements in Northern Ireland, RES would encourage all stakeholders to take steps to ensure that these and similar discriminatory outcomes are avoided.

- Section 5 Operations and Maintenance: RES notes that clear guidelines are proposed in Section 4 for contestability to apply from the point of connection, whereas in Section 5.2.2, it is proposed that NIE and SONI are to determine ownership boundaries. RES would be keen to understand likely ownership boundaries and how they would interact with contestability.
- Section 6 Accreditation: RES supports the principle of accredited connection providers and agrees with earlier responses that any scheme should not slow down initial implementation of contestability or be overly burdensome to potential connection providers. The Lloyds NERS scheme in GB currently has 211 registered organisations of varying sizes and abilities. The scheme does not appear to have stifled the development of entrants into the GB market.

RES remains committed to supporting the introduction of contestability in connections in Northern Ireland and would repeat its offer to participate in and contribute to the work of the Contestability Working Group. If you wish to discuss any aspect of this response, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely,

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