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Ref: NET/E/TH/271

Dear Alan

Request that the Authority¹ consent to extend the Connection Offer Timelines for Connection Application for Belfast Power Limited CCGT Project

Thank you for your letter of 18 September 2020 (“the **Letter**”).

We treat the Letter as a request (under Condition 25(5) of SONI’s TSO Licence (“the **Licence**”)) seeking the Authority’s consent to extend the time required to issue the Connection Offer to Belfast Power Limited for its CCGT project from 29 October 2020 to 27 January 2021.

Condition 25(5) of the licence obliges SONI to offer terms to connect in respect of the Application *as soon as practicable* and in any event within the period designated in Condition 25(7), save where the Authority consents to a longer period. Condition 25(7) provides that the designated period is 3 months from receipt of the Application.

SONI received a transmission connection application from Belfast Power Limited (“**BPL**”) for the Belfast Power CCGT project on 1 July 2020. SONI assessed the application and following the provision of additional information and payment of the relevant connection application fees, deemed this to be valid on 31 July 2020. The application requests a total Maximum Export Capacity (“**MEC**”) of 468 MW. In accordance with Condition 25 of SONI’s TSO Licence, the Connection Offer is due to be issued on or before 29 October 2020.

SONI requests that the UR consents to that period being extended to the longer period of 27 January 2021.

*Our consideration of the SONI request for a consent to a longer period (“the **Request**”)*

In the Letter, SONI states that the submission of the Construction Application to the NIE Networks Limited (“**NIE Networks**”), in its role as Transmission Owner (“**TO**”) has been

¹ In this letter “we”, “the UR”, and “the Authority” are used interchangeably to refer to the Northern Ireland Authority for Utility Regulation.

delayed as SONI requires more time to assess the connection options and the technical complexities. This is a result of the following:

- The complexity of the connection arrangements for the Belfast Power CCGT Project; and
- Further time needed to obtain more clarity around assumptions regarding other connections. A change to those assumptions has the potential to impact on the Belfast Power Limited connection.

In the Letter, SONI proposes (as already indicated) that the UR consent to the Condition 25(7) period being extended in the circumstances to 27 January 2021. The Letter confirms that SONI will endeavour to make an offer of terms to connect for the Application sooner than this “*if possible*” and it notes that there remains unknown and potentially unforeseen impacts of the ongoing Covid-19 pandemic in relation to the connection offer process including, but not limited to, availability of key staff both within SONI and the TO.

In considering the Request we have had regard to the input of relevant stakeholders. This input has taken the form of engagement between SONI, NIE Networks and BPL (the applicant for the Application) in relation to the Request. This engagement is set out in Annexes to the request Letter. The UR recognises that NIE Networks has raised no objection to the Request and that Belfast Power Limited has also raised no objection to the Request.

Decision on the Request

Having considered the matter fully, and taken all relevant matters into account, the UR hereby confirms that it consents to the Request. Accordingly, the period provided by virtue of Condition 25(7) – in respect of the Application - is hereby extended to the longer period of 27 January 2021 subject to the requirement that is a “*long stop*” date. Accordingly, the obligation under Condition 25 of the Licence is (now) to offer terms of connection for the Application “as soon as practicable” and “in any event no later than” 27 January 2021. SONI’s connection obligation (under the Licence) is not (now) simply to offer connection terms by 27 January 2021.

The UR notes that SONI has recognised this in its statement that it shall endeavour to make an offer of terms to connect before the new (extended) date “*if possible*”. SONI of course will be mindful of its actual Licence obligation in this regard.

Yours sincerely,



Tanya Hedley
Director of Networks