

Alan Campbell  
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12 Manse Road,  
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01 February 2021

Ref: NET/E/TH/311

Dear Alan

**Request that the Authority<sup>1</sup> consent to extend the Connection Offer Timelines for Connection Application for Belfast Power Limited CCGT Project**

Thank you for your letter of 13 January 2021 ("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 for the time period within which SONI is required to issue a connection offer to Belfast Power Limited ("**BPL**") in response to the application made by BPL for a connection of its CCGT project to be further extended to 26 July 2021 ("the **Request**").

Condition 25(5) of the licence obliges SONI to offer terms to connect in respect of an application made to it *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 ("the **Application**"). SONI assessed the Application and following the provision of additional information and payment of the relevant connection application fees, deemed it 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, a connection offer was initially due to be issued by SONI by no later than 29 October 2020.

However, having received and considered a request from SONI, the UR gave its consent (by way of a letter dated 8 October 2020) for the time period within which SONI was required to make the connection offer to be extended such that it was required to make the offer by no later than 27 January 2021.

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<sup>1</sup> In this letter "we", "the UR", and "the Authority" are used interchangeably to refer to the Northern Ireland Authority for Utility Regulation.

In the Letter, SONI now requests the UR to give consent for the time period for the making of the connection offer to be further extended to 26 July 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**”) was previously delayed as SONI required more time to assess the connection options and the technical complexities but that SONI submitted the Construction Application to NIE Networks on 3 December 2020.

The Letter then explains that at a meeting held between SONI and NIE Networks on 10 December 2020, NIE Networks explained that the modifications required to/at the Castlereagh substation in order to facilitate the transmission connection sought by BPL presented certain issues in relation to equipment ratings.

As a result SONI and NIE Networks agreed that because:

- Studies to assess the impact of the Belfast Power CCGT on transmission fault levels indicated that the connection could proceed based on the equipment ratings understood at the time of the submission of the Construction Application.
- NIE had identified certain errors and/or misrepresentations in its consultant’s report which established that modifications that are likely to be required to that part of the transmission network which is to facilitate the connection sought by BPL would likely result in derating of existing structures to a level that would be insufficient.
- Of the likely need to undertake considerable works to the current 275kV Castlereagh Substation, SONI and NIE Networks needed further time to work together in order to confirm the new ratings and ensure that the Least Cost Technically Accepted (“**LCTA**”) connection arrangement is offered for the connection of the Belfast Power CCGT Project.

The Letter explains that as SONI is still awaiting receipt of the data required from NIE Networks it requires additional time to establish the current position of the connection arrangement and prepare the submission of a revised Construction Application to NIE Networks.

Accordingly, SONI requests that the UR give its consent to the period for making a connection offer to BPL to be extended to 26 July 2021. The Letter confirms that SONI will endeavour to make an offer of terms to connect in response to the Application sooner than this “*if possible*”.

In considering the Request the UR has had regard to the views of relevant stakeholders in response to the consultation undertaken by with NIE Networks and BPL. At the time it sent

the Letter, SONI had not received the responses from NIE Networks and BPL but they were forwarded by SONI to the UR by email on 25 January<sup>2</sup> and 26 January 2021<sup>3</sup> respectively.

The UR notes that neither NIE Networks nor BPL have raised any objections or any specific issues or concerns about SONI's request for a further extension to the period for making a connection offer to BPL.

The UR also notes that in its response, NIE Networks has indicated that while it is difficult for it to provide a clear indication of the likely timescales that may be involved for it to provide a 'construction offer' to SONI, the position should become clearer as the design work progresses.

The UR also asked further questions of SONI as to the steps it was taking to progress the matter.

### ***Decision on the Request***

Having considered the matter fully, including SONI's response to the further questions, and taken all relevant matters into account, the UR gives its consent for the back stop date for the making of the connection offer to be extended to 26 July 2021.

Accordingly, SONI is required to make a connection offer to BPL as soon as practicable and in any event by no later than **26 July 2021**.

This consent is subject to SONI providing the UR with an update by no later than 26 April 2021 as to the progress that has been made between SONI and NIE Networks in respect of the works required to facilitate the making of the connection sought by BPL.

Finally, the UR reiterates that the licence obligation requires SONI to make a connection offer to BPL "*as soon as practicable*". Accordingly, it takes this opportunity to remind SONI that it will wish to be able to demonstrate that it is taking such steps as are requisite in the circumstances of the case in compliance of the applicable licence obligation.

Yours sincerely,



**Tanya Hedley**  
**Director of Networks**

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<sup>2</sup> The consultation response is contained in an email from Ailish McLaughlin to Clodagh Goodman sent 25 January at 11:06.

<sup>3</sup> The consultation response is contained in an email from Tim Galbraith to Clodagh Goodman sent 26 January 2021 at 16:38.