



Ms Nola Jamieson
Senior Planning Officer
DfI Strategic Planning Directorate
Clarence Court
10-18 Adelaide Street
Belfast
BT2 8GB
08/03/19

www.soni.ltd.uk
Castlereagh House
12 Manse Road, Belfast BT6 9RT
Telephone +44 28 907 94336
Email info@soni.ltd.uk

Tyrone to Cavan (North South) 400kV Interconnector

Dear Ms Jamieson,

I am following up on the recent decision by the high court to quash the approvals for the North South 400kV interconnector. I understand that the DfI will now have to consider whether it is necessary to request Further Environmental Information ('FEI') from SONI to update the information previously submitted or as a consequence of a material change in circumstances since January 2018.

To assist the DfI in its consideration of this issue, please find attached a short report prepared by our lead environmental consultants 'Aecom' which summarises the studies which it has undertaken between 2005 and 2017 in producing the various chapters of the Consolidated Environmental Statement (2013), its Addendum (2015) and material published in support of the Public Inquiry (2017). The report also identifies any known changes in the local environment, and in legislation and guidance since that time.

SONI would request that DfI utilise this report and the previous project documentation in its consideration as to whether FEI is necessary.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Shane Brennan", is placed over a light blue rectangular background.

Shane Brennan
North South Project Manager
SONI Ltd

SONI Limited
Castlereagh House
12 Manse Road
Belfast
Northern Ireland
BT6 9RT
Company Registration
No. NI038715

North-South Interconnector

Environmental Update

8 March 2019

Quality information

<u>Prepared by</u>	<u>Checked by</u>	<u>Verified by</u>	<u>Approved by</u>
Barry Sheridan Associate Director	Elaine Keenan	Niamh O'Connell	Barry Sheridan

Revision History

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Final	08/03/2019			Barry Sheridan	Associate Director

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Prepared for:

SONI

Prepared by:

Barry Sheridan
Associate Director
E: barry.sheridan@aecom.com

AECOM Ireland Limited
4th Floor
Adelphi Plaza
Georges Street Upper
Dun Laoghaire
Co. Dublin A96 T927
Ireland

T: +353 1 238 3100
aecom.com

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Introduction

The planning permissions for the North-South Interconnector have now been quashed by the High Court in Belfast. The judicial review challenging the lawfulness of the permissions succeeded only on the ground that the Permanent Secretary of the Department for Infrastructure ("DFI") did not have the legal powers to determine the applications and all other grounds pertaining to the contents of the planning applications and the environmental information accompanying same were unsuccessful. As a result of the permissions being quashed, the planning applications have been sent back to the DFI for reconsideration.

Given that the planning applications were previously approved in January 2018, the DFI will now have to consider whether it is necessary to request Further Environmental Information ("FEI") from SONI to update the information previously submitted or as a consequence of a material change in circumstances since January 2018. To assist the DFI in its consideration of this issue, SONI has agreed to submit a short report to the DFI summarising the studies which it has undertaken between 2005 and 2017 in producing the various chapters of the Consolidated Environmental Statement (2013), its Addendum (2015) and material published in support of the Public Inquiry (2017). The report also identifies any known changes in the local environment, and in legislation and guidance since that time. Please find access to documents as listed below at this link: <http://www.soni.ltd.uk/the-grid/projects/tyrone-cavan/related-documents/>

- Consolidated Environmental Statement (2013);
- Addendum to Environmental Statement (2015); and
- Statements of Case and Rebuttals (2017).

You will already be in receipt of these documents, however a link an to electronic copy is provided for ease of use.

Accordingly, SONI would request that DFI gives consideration as to whether FEI is necessary. The need for FEI could arise, for example, because of:

- The publication of new legislation, guidance, policies or standards;
- Changes in circumstances / new developments; and
- The passage of time making it necessary to update environmental information

Current Status of Environmental Information

The Table below comprises of the current status of environmental information gathered and submitted for consideration to date, in addition to identification of the studies undertaken up to 2017. The environmental topics below, are listed in the order they fall within the Consolidated Environmental Statement and its Addendum.

ES Topic/ Chapter	Previous Surveys/Assessment	Previous Findings	Changes in local environment	Changes in legislation/guidance
Need for the Scheme	The need for the scheme was established in the Consolidated ES (2013), its Addendum (2015) and updated assessment (Public Inquiry documents 2017) to take account of Brexit	The project was determined to be needed: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - To help lower prices; - For security of supply; - To facilitate growth of renewable energy. 	No known material changes.	<p>None – no change on the assessment of Brexit since last published assessment (2017)</p> <p>RoI - Legislation recently proposed by the Irish Government provides for additional powers to the Commission for the Regulation of Utilities, to facilitate the continuing operation of the Single Electricity Market in the event of a no-deal Brexit. (Brexit Omnibus Bill Part 4)</p> <p>In ROI the decision of An Bord Pleanála to grant planning consent, has been upheld by the courts</p>
Planning and Development	Evaluated planning and development policies relevant to the scheme	Proposal Policy Compliant.	N/A	No new Regional Planning Policy. Draft Plan Strategy for Mid Ulster Council has been issued and emerging policy has been reviewed. No material change with Regional Policy. Armagh, Banbridge and Craigavon Council Preferred Options Paper has been reviewed and the Council's proposed policy approach is to propose policies consistent with Regional Policy. No material change with Regional Policy

ES Topic/ Chapter	Previous Surveys/Assessment	Previous Findings	Changes in local environment	Changes in legislation/guidance
Alternatives	Detailed assessment in Consolidated ES (2013) and Addendum (2015): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - UGC versus OHL - AC vs DC studies - Tower designs & support structures - 400kV versus 275 kV - Partial Undergrounding report (2015) 	The overhead line AC 400kV design, as published, was the preferred solution	No known material changes.	The Irish government has published reports by an independent international commission which found that, 'from a techno-economic point of view, an AC overhead line is the most beneficial way of meeting the need for enhanced power transfer capability between the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland.'
Proposed Development	No change to previously approved design			
EMF	Evaluated potential impacts in-line with national guidance.	No significant effects	No known material changes.	No changes since last update in 2017 (Statement of Case for Public Inquiry)
Water Environment	Walk over completed in 2012 and assessment made of effects to watercourses in the area.	With mitigation, no significant effects.	No known material changes.	None
Soils, Geology and Groundwater	Field walkover surveys took place in 2011 and 2012.	No significant effects identified.	No known material changes.	None
Ecology (AA)	Shadow Stage 2 submitted in 2015 Stage 2 AA completed by NIEA in 2016	No significant effects to conservation features or status	No known material changes.	No change in guidance/legislation, however there has been new case law on AA
Ecology (EIA)	Ecological surveys & assessment undertaken 2005 – 2017 to cover: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Breeding Birds - Newts - Badgers & Otter - Phase 1 Habitats - Wintering Birds - Bats <li style="padding-left: 20px;">Roost/Activity - Barn Owl 	Overall, no significant effects on ecology	No known material changes – area dominated by improved grassland (agricultural)	No significant changes
Noise and Vibration	Noise surveys took place between 2005 and 2012, and 2016	No significant effects identified.	No known material changes.	None
Cultural Heritage	Cultural heritage surveys took place in 2008, 2012 and 2013	Moderate adverse effects identified on the setting of five assets.	No known material changes.	None

ES Topic/ Chapter	Previous Surveys/Assessment	Previous Findings	Changes in local environment	Changes in legislation/guidance
Landscape and Visual	Surveys were undertaken between 2004 and 2016.	Significant adverse landscape and visual effects in some parts of the study area.	No known material changes.	None
Community Amenity	Desk survey and site visits taken place between 2008 and 2016.	Significant adverse effects on two planning applications. No other significant effects after construction.	No known material changes.	None
Land use and Agronomy	Desk top and field surveys took place to identify effects on local farm holdings.	Imperceptible effects on the amount of land available for agriculture.	No known material changes.	None.
Socio economics	Desk top and field surveys to identify tourism enterprises and businesses between 2008 and 2016.	No significant effects to tourism/recreation amenities and businesses but major adverse effect to bioremediation unit at Linwoods Factory.	No known material changes.	None
Telecommunications and Aviation Assets	Telecommunication and Aviation assessment undertaken as part of EIA	No significant effects	No known material changes.	None
Flood Risk Assessment	Flood risk assessment undertaken in accordance with guidance	No significant effects	No known material changes.	None
Traffic and Transport	Desk and Field surveys in 2012, 2013 and 2016. Haulage route assessment completed 2014.	No significant effects identified based on traffic management during construction at certain areas.	No known material changes.	None
Air Quality and Climate	Air Quality and Climate assessed in line with national guidance	With Mitigation, No significant effects	No known material changes.	None
Cumulative and interrelationship of impacts	Cumulative impacts assessed in line with guidance	Significant landscape and visual effects in some parts of the study area. No other significant cumulative effects.	No known material changes.	None
Transboundary impacts	Transboundary impacts assessed in-line with guidance	Significant landscape and visual effects in some parts of the study area. No other significant cumulative effects.	No known material changes.	None

