

Our Ref: TC/tg/LK

18 December 2020

By Email Only: alan.campbell@soni.ltd.uk

Dear Alan

Re: Consultation from SONI on the Draft Transmission Development Plan 2020-2029

Thank you for the opportunity to engage with SONI on the current consultation of your Draft Transmission Development Plan 2020-2029. Mid and East Antrim Borough Council very much welcomes this opportunity and any future opportunity to engage with SONI. As host area for both Kilroot and Ballylumford, we are aware of the significance of power generation not only to our local economy, but also for Northern Ireland plc.

The Draft Transmission Plan is complex, and by its nature involves considerable factors. As the new Energy Strategy is being developed by the Department for the Economy, and the Prime Minister's Green Recovery plans roll out, we are at a pivotal moment in the energy sector.

Council supports the planned investment by SONI to upgrade the electricity network infrastructure in the Borough and wider mid-to-north County Antrim region, where the electricity grid is currently at near full capacity. As the traditional heartland of Northern Ireland manufacturing, energy plays a significant role for the Mid and East Antrim business base. Green projects are proposed as a means of economic recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic and of "levelling-up" the regions of the UK. This investment will improve the electricity network and secure the supply for local industry, particularly businesses in rural areas. It will also unlock grid connection for potential expansion and increase flow of electricity from renewable sources such as wind and solar to be integrated to the network.

Such investment supports Council's vision that "Mid and East Antrim will be a strong, safe and inclusive community, where people work together to improve the quality of life for all". The proposed investment also aligns with one of Council's key priorities regarding the environment, as set out in the Corporate Plan 2019-23 and ultimately, more renewable generation will contribute to the decarbonisation of our economy.

Please reply to:

■ **Head Office**
The Braid
1-29 Bridge Street
Ballymena BT43 5EJ

□ **Ballymena Office**
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80 Galgorm Road
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Victoria Road
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Silverwood Business Park
190 Raceview Road
Ballymena
BT42 4HZ

Chief Executive
Anne Donaghy OBE

Council is aware of the UK Government's commitment to achieve net zero carbon emissions by 2050, and the significant decarbonisation required to achieve this. Council is committed to reducing its carbon footprint and improving environmental performance year on year, demonstrated through its accreditation to ISO 14001:2015, the international standard for environmental management which ensures that Council reduces the impact of its services on the environment and improves its environmental performance year on year.

On a technical note, page 46 of the draft document refers to SONI submitting planning applications with the relevant planning authority and goes on to state "the planning authority will make a legally binding decision on the project. It may grant full planning permission, grant permission on the basis that we make changes or refuse permission". Council do not think "may grant permission on the basis that SONI make changes" is an accurate reflection of the planning permission process as any changes should be made as part of the planning application before permission is granted. Conditions may be imposed on a permission but there should never be a scenario where permission is granted whilst changes are still to be made.

Council is in principal supportive of SONI's draft Transmission Development Plan 2020-2029, accompanied by appropriate environmental safeguards and Planning approval. Council would welcome further inclusion in any future consultation, design and implementation phases.

Yours sincerely



Anne Donaghy OBE
Clerk & Chief Executive

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