

Security of Supply

SONI Market Message

September 2025

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1. Message Purpose

Market Messages play an important role in alerting Market Participants to issues in the Single Electricity Market (SEM). SONI has produced this Market Message with the intention of providing updated information pertaining to the operational state of the Northern Ireland power system.

2. Message Context

Our TSO Licence requires SONI to operate the system in accordance with the Transmission System Security and Planning Standards and the Operating Security Standards. This means that we need to maintain secure supplies in the event of contingencies, including the failure of a double circuit, such as the North – South tie line.

To maintain these standards, we require sufficient inertia, voltage capability and ramping capacity on the Northern Ireland system to respond to contingencies, including a sudden separation from Ireland. This is currently achieved by ensuring that a minimum number¹ of large conventional generators are operating at any time. There is also a requirement for locational diversity, to protect the system against single points of failure and to support with the management of the Northern Ireland system.

SONI keeps the minimum number of units required to secure the Northern Ireland system under review, to ensure that operational constraints are minimised, however it is these constraints which ensure the continued stability and security of the electricity system.

2025 has been a challenging year operationally due to prolonged outages of conventional generation. These outages have meant that SONI has had to rely more heavily on generation subject to Annual Run-Hour Limits (ARHL). As a result, some ARHL generators in Northern Ireland are now approaching limits.

3. Run Hour Analysis

SONI are managing a number of operational challenges to ensure the continued secure operation of the Northern Ireland power system.

There is a current expectation that there will be significantly less conventional generation available in Northern Ireland in the near-term, with uncertainty remaining until 31st December 2025. The unavailability of large units in Northern Ireland represents a significant challenge to operating the power system securely, as operational constraints cannot be satisfied.

As SONI balances competing Security of Supply concerns, there has been a recent requirement to operate the system outside of operational constraints and several System Alert (Amber) notifications have recently been issued with Market Participants updated with respect to Northern Ireland system status.

Considering increasing Security of Supply challenges, SONI has conducted analysis on the need for ARHL generation to operate in excess of permitted hours to support Security of Supply in Northern Ireland.

¹ Minimum stability trial NI allows for two of five large generators to operate

The analysis shows for the system to operate securely, through to the end of 2025, ARHL generation could be required to operate in excess of 1,100 hours. This operation is required to ensure the stability and security of the Northern Ireland system and so there is sufficient generation available to meet demand.

SONI continue to work closely with the Department for the Economy and Utility Regulator to provide timely analysis and expertise to ensure security of supply can be maintained in Northern Ireland.