

# UPDATE



6 JANUARY 2017

**RHI Review must focus on scheme failings:** The UFU has made clear that the focus of the review of the Renewable Heat Incentive (RHI) scheme must remain on the failings of others to deliver a scheme with adequate safeguards and that those using the scheme legitimately to reduce energy bills should not be made scapegoats or treated unfairly for the failures of the scheme. The UFU is advising members who availed of the scheme not to give permission for their names to be disclosed, unless audits have been carried out of their installation. Without the audit farmers risk being criticised, without being able to show they acted within the terms of the scheme. The department responsible has been slow at getting these audits done and it has no excuses for its failure to act in a timely way. (See below DfE Letter Response for more info). To read the story in full visit: <http://bit.ly/2iPjyFW> The UFU is also reviewing its involvement in the negotiations that surrounded the closure of the scheme.

## RHI Collaborative Group Formed/Guidance on Replying to DfE Letter

**Renewable Heat Association NI** – On Wednesday a meeting was held involving Action Renewables, UFU, poultry and mushroom grower associations, biomass representatives and boiler installers to discuss the RHI. It was agreed that a collaborative group would be set up to represent the interests of those who had entered the scheme for legitimate reasons and who were using the boilers legitimately. The group will be called the Renewable Heat Association NI. The website will be going live shortly and will provide members with updates on the situation.

**DfE Letter Response** – The deadline for response is 5pm on 10 January. The legal advice received is that responses should be sent clearly stating a refusal to disclose names and addresses. If no consent is given then DfE should not be able to disclose this detail. However, this may not be true in relation to 'limited companies'. However their advice is to write back and refuse. The Renewable Heat Association (NI) have completed a letter template for members to return to DfE, the letter will be emailed to UFU Group Offices today who will distribute to members upon request. UFU HQ will do likewise if approached directly by members. The letter can be submitted by post or email: [NonDomesticRHI@economy-ni.gov.uk](mailto:NonDomesticRHI@economy-ni.gov.uk)

**UFU attend Oxford Farming Conference:** UFU Leaders have attended the 2016 Oxford Farming Conference held at Oxford University. Conference speakers included Defra secretary, Andrea Leadsom, NFU deputy president, Minette Batters and controversial journalist and political activist, George Monbiot. The theme of the conference - 'Thrive or Survive' focused on questions facing the agriculture sector post-Brexit. UFU Board Member Fiona Hanna, also attend the conference after being selected through the Emerging Leaders initiative, which builds on the OFC's successful UK and international scholars' programmes.

**2017 Arable Conference** – Last chance to register: **How to Book your Place?** Conference cost is £30 per person and booking is via the UFU website [www.ufuni.org/events](http://www.ufuni.org/events) if you have difficulty booking online, please contact Angela Scott at UFU HQ on 028 9037 0222. Note: Places cannot be reserved and payment in full is required at the time of booking by credit or debit card.

**UFU's Winter Road Shows** – Next week the UFU Leadership team will hit the road with its Winter Road Shows. The meetings have a new format and will focus on the future of farming. These road show events are an opportunity to hear members' views, and for them to put questions directly to the UFU leadership team. The focus will be on the facilitated panel discussion and we are expecting lots of questions and a spirited debate. All meetings start at 8pm

- **Monday 9th January, Killyhevlin Hotel, Enniskillen, County Fermanagh**
  - Chairperson – David Wright, Irish Farmers' Journal
- **Wednesday 11th January, Armagh City Hotel, Armagh, County Armagh**
  - Chairperson – Robert Irwin, Farm Week
- **Monday 16th January, Tullyglass Hotel, Ballymena, County Antrim**
  - - Chairperson – Ruth Sanderson, BBC
- **Wednesday 18th January, Silver Birch Hotel, Omagh, County Tyrone**
  - Chairperson – Conor Macauley, BBC
- **Monday 23th January, Roe Park Resort, Limavady, County Londonderry**
  - Chairperson – Richard Halleron, Farming Life
- **Wednesday 25th January, Millbrook Lodge, Ballynahinch, County Down**
  - Chairperson – Karen Patterson, BBC

**Slurry Exports:** The UFU is reminding farmers that under the Nitrates Action Programme (2015-2017) a record of all organic manure exports off (including slurry, farmyard manure and poultry litter/manure) the farm must be recorded and submitted to NIEA by 31 January for the previous calendar year. If farmers exporting organic manures do not submit records, the information cannot be taken into account for calculating the nitrogen loading on the farm to check compliance with the 170kgN/ha/year limit (250kgN/ha/year for derogated farms) and penalties could be applied. Records for the 2016 calendar year must be submitted to NIEA by the 31<sup>st</sup> January 2017, failure to submit by this date is likely to increase the risk of inspection during the 2017 and penalties could be applied. Template export forms for exports within Northern Ireland can be obtained from the DAERA website <http://bit.ly/2iDBKCY>

**Avian Influenza** – The UFU are reminding members of the 30 day Avian Influenza Prevention Zone and suspension of poultry gatherings in Northern Ireland, in light of the heightened risk of Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza H5N8 in the UK and Republic of Ireland. The Prevention Zone for NI has been in place from 12.00pm on 23<sup>rd</sup> December 2016 and will last for 30 days. There is also a temporary suspension of gatherings of some species of birds. Whether your poultry flock is large or small - ensure that all biosecurity measures are in place and are as robust as possible to protect the health of your flock. To read the story in full visit: <http://bit.ly/2hW0xTV> for further information visit: <https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/>

**Prince's Farm Resilience Programme**- the Prince's Countryside Fund will be launching 'The Prince's Farm Resilience Programme' throughout the UK in early 2017 to include Northern Ireland. This small scale initiative is aimed at full time dairy or beef and sheep farmers who are not currently practising benchmarking or engaged in a business development programme and are looking at ways to improve their business and make efficiencies. Support will be provided through one to one on farm meetings and also a series of five group workshops to be delivered by professional consultants. The workshops will focus on general business areas such as finance and business planning, making efficiencies and looking at new opportunities. The programme