



RURAL ENTERPRISE COMMITTEE MINUTES

The Rural Enterprise Policy Committee met on Thursday 3 March, South West College, Enniskillen.

ATTENDANCE: B Bell (Deputy Chairman) G Hawkes (Chairman) B Armstrong, R Campbell, R Craig, M Harnett, S Johnston, B Kerr, P Lundy, J Watt and C Osborne (Secretary).

APOLOGIES: R Burgess (Vice Chairman)

WELCOME: The Chairman welcomed the Committee to the meeting.

MINUTES

The Minutes of meeting held on 29 September 2015 were agreed and signed.

MATTER ARISING

None

COMMUNICATION

Irrelevant information redacted by the RHI Inquiry

Closure of the NIRO for Small Scale Onshore Wind

Irrelevant information redacted by the RHI Inquiry

Closure of the Northern Ireland Renewable Heat Incentive (RHI)

The Department of Enterprise Trade and Investment (DETI) confirmed in mid-February that it plans to end the RHI scheme in Northern Ireland. There was no consultation on this closure. DETI had two opportunities to introduce a phased closure which would have avoided the sudden ending of the scheme. The UFU met DETI in July 2015 and we warned of an imminent spike in demand and in the following Spending Review in November, DETI were made aware of the imminent overspend. A stepped closure would have avoided the over-spend which led to the panic decision on the part of DETI and this would have put a brake on a scheme around which many farmers have built long term investment plans.

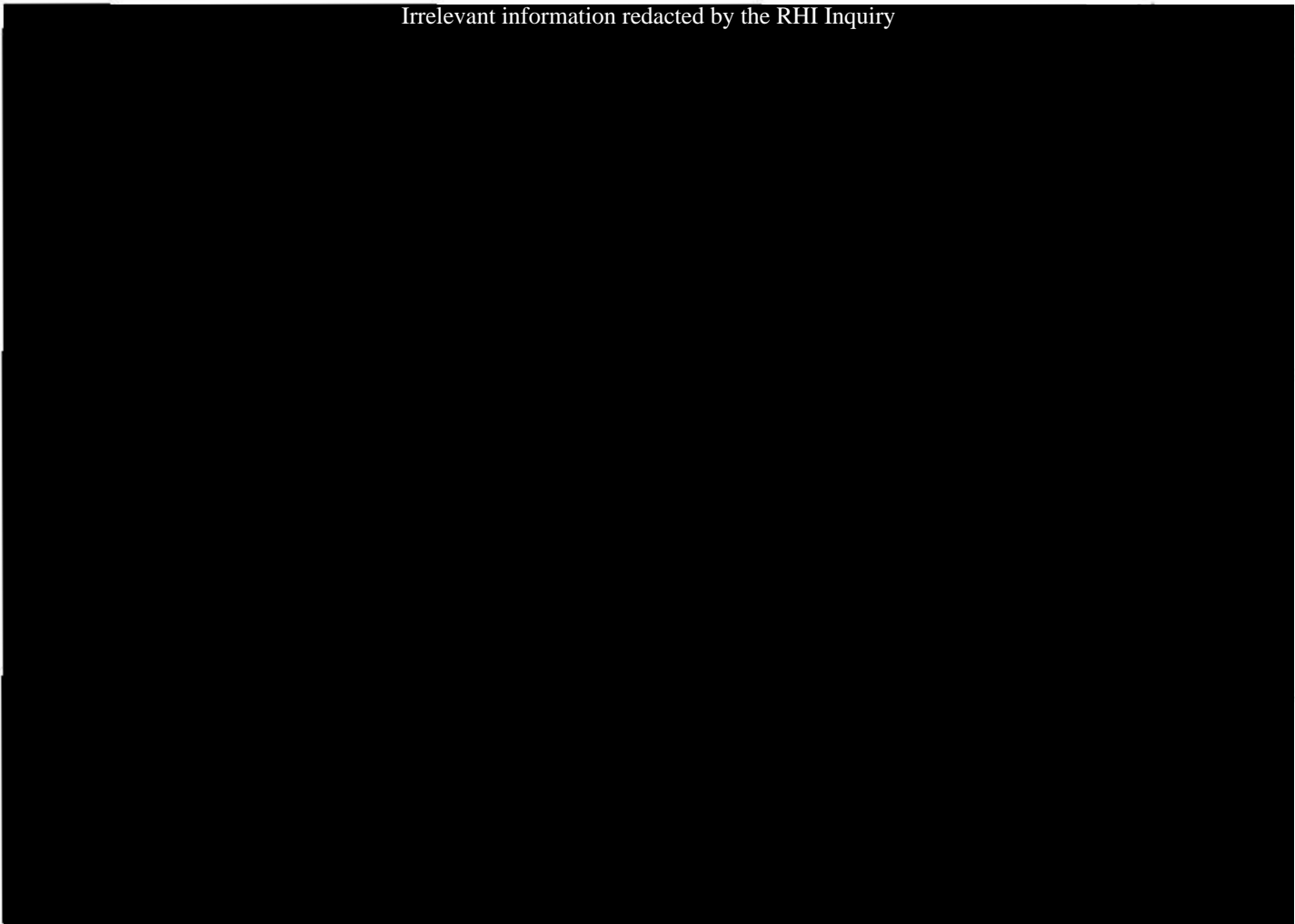
The big losers will be poultry farmers investing in new biomass boilers. While these are expensive the RHI made them affordable, but now farmers who have committed to these will be denied the aid needed to make them economic. Our concern was that up until this decision many farmers were working towards a deadline of 31 March 2016 in good faith. The UFU recognise that it is fair to close the RHI scheme to new projects, but those who can show they have invested in expectation of support should be allowed time to complete projects before the scheme ends.

RC asked the question whether or not we are we paying for the misuse of the RHI? In relation to the RHI The problem is that the boilers are kept on all the time. There has been an element of fraud in the roll out of the RHI and the problem is that the RHI was not policed nor correctly managed by DETI/OFGEM. Another concern was that there are quality differences in the wood pellets in Northern Ireland

Chair informed the Committee about pending problems with Solar PV due to quality problems.

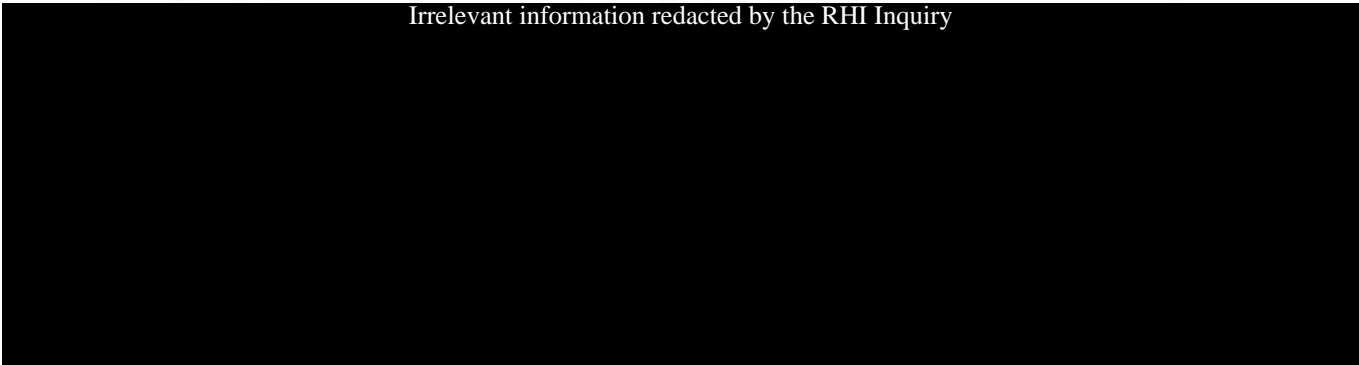
NIE Networks

Irrelevant information redacted by the RHI Inquiry



AES Kilroot and battery storage

Irrelevant information redacted by the RHI Inquiry



Future Grid Development and Grid Access

Irrelevant information redacted by the RHI Inquiry



Irrelevant information redacted by the RHI Inquiry

Belfast Telegraph Cup Nomination

Irrelevant information redacted by the RHI Inquiry

Date of next meeting

End of May/beginning of June 2016