

ULSTER FARMERS' UNION NEWS RELEASE**Date: 10 March 2016****Cyclo 63/2016****UFU welcomes new consultation on small scale turbines**

The Ulster Farmers Union has welcomed confirmation by the DETI minister, Jonathan Bell, that he will consult separately on the NIRO (Northern Ireland Renewable Obligation) closure for small scale wind turbines. The UFU is now pressing for swift action by DETI on revised and improved proposals.

The UFU has been concerned that smaller projects, often awaiting grid connection confirmation, lost out when DETI proposed closing support for onshore wind. Along with Simple Power it has sought a judicial review of the consultation process that extended this to smaller land-based schemes.

"We are pleased DETI is reconsidering its process and consultation. We are however disappointed it has taken until now, a few weeks before the dissolution of the Assembly, to act – although we understand DETI hopes to issue the consultation before the end of March," said UFU deputy president, Barclay Bell. He said it was clear the cut-off date for qualifying projects of 30 September 2015 is not movable, since this was set by the Department of Energy and Climate Change (DECC) in London.

"We have asked DETI, as part of the new consultation, to improve the deal in other areas. We have lobbied for an extended investment freeze grace period. This would apply to projects that due to uncertainty around the NIRO closure have been delayed in securing funding. This would mean that these projects could connect until March 2019," said Mr Bell.

The UFU is also seeking flexibility over turbine type, if that has to be changed despite the September 2015 deadline being past, subject to it being of the same general type and generating capacity. This is to allow for conditions where the planned turbine cannot be acquired within the new time scale for completing the project. "We have made strong representations on behalf of our members and will continue to do so. We look forward to contributing to the new consultation and to securing more clarity about the NIRO closure terms," said Mr Bell.

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