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11 November 2015

Mr Patsy McGlone MLA
Chairperson
ETI Committee
Parliament Buildings
Stormont
Belfast
BT4 3XX

Dear Patsy,

Proposed Closure of Northern Ireland Renewables Obligation for Onshore Wind and Future of Support for Small Scale Renewables

I am writing to you today on two issues which will have a detrimental impact on the future of small scale renewables in Northern Ireland.

Proposed Closure of Northern Ireland Renewables Obligation for Onshore Wind

You will be fully aware that the Ulster Farmers Unions are opposed to the DETI proposal to close NI ROC support for small scale onshore wind projects in Northern Ireland one year early.

It has been brought to my attention that the ETI Committee yesterday expressed their support for Northern Ireland's small scale wind turbine sector and I am writing to pass our gratitude for this going forward. However, we are disappointed that we were not invited to speak at yesterday's Committee meeting, we would welcome the opportunity to do so in the near future.

The UFU have made numerous formal requests over the last couple of weeks to meet the DECC Minister Amber Rudd to discuss this and our requests have been refused. Therefore, we welcome the ETI Committee's decision to join Jonathan Bell in seeking a meeting with the DECC Minister Amber Rudd MP.

The UFU are concerned at the dismissive attitude of DECC towards DETI to date and we would ask that the Committee request for OFMDFM to use its influence with the Prime Minister to see if a solution can be found. The fact that DECC will (apparently) not allow DETI any latitude to provide a stand-alone NIRO solution for small scale wind, seems to us both irrational and extremely unfair and we would welcome the opportunity to hear the reasons behind the decision.

It is our understanding that Simple Power have written to yourselves suggesting changes to the detail of the eligibility criteria and we are fully supportive of this and urge that you take this into consideration when you meet the DECC Minister.

There is another crucial matter we would ask that the ETI Committee raise at the DECC Minister meeting.

Future of Support for Small Scale Renewables

In the Autumn, in their "Consultation on a Review of the Feed-in Tariff Scheme" DECC set out their intention not to extend the small scale Feed-In Tariff scheme to Northern Ireland. We replied to this consultation and forwarded a copy of our response to on 23 October 2015 and we continue to lobby on this matter.

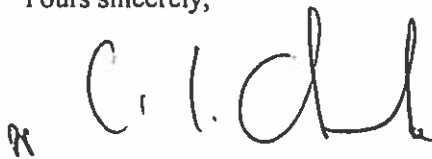
On 30 October 2015, we received an email reply from Tom Barrett, Private Secretary to the DECC Minister. In his reply he stated that since energy policy is devolved in Northern Ireland, it is for DETI to consider how best to incentive small-scale renewables.

The UFU are calling for parity of treatment within the UK by demanding the introduction of the GB FIT for small scale wind into NI. We are nevertheless realistic in our expectation that the tariff level will not match current ROC support levels, but it needs to act as an incentive for the uptake of future renewable energy generation.

We have always maintained that improvements in on-farm energy efficiency are key going forward in terms of meeting Climate Change targets. However, for this to happen, the RO needs to be replaced with some sort of financial support mechanism.

If you need any further information or have any questions please do not hesitate to get in touch.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'G. Hawkes', with a small 'R' to the left.

Gary Hawkes
UFU Rural Enterprise Chairman