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Patsy McGlone MLA  
Chair, Committee for Enterprise, Trade and Investment  
Northern Ireland Assembly  
Parliament Buildings  
Ballymiscaw  
Stormont  
Belfast  
BT4 3XX

Dear Mr McGlone,

**SL1 Proposed Renewables Obligation Closure Order (Northern Ireland) 2015**

The Ulster Farmers Union (UFU) is writing to the ETI Committee to express our concerns at their decision not to legislate for the introduction of an appropriate grace period to accompany the closure of the NIRO in 2017. Furthermore, we are gravely concerned at the mooted desire of some members of the Committee to press for the early closure of the NIRO in line with the decision in GB.

The Northern Ireland Small Scale Renewables sector is still in its infancy and any legislative hesitancy as far as support is concerned could create uncertainty in the sector and spell the end for many potential small scale renewable projects.

- **Grid Connection**

The NIE Grid Connection structure is already under severe strain, with over 400 grid connection applications stuck in the system with no indication as to when they will proceed. Failure to legislate for an appropriate grace period could result in a run on grid connection applications which could make an already under pressure situation reach a breaking point.

- **Role of Small Scale Renewables in Northern Ireland Agriculture**

Small scale energy generation is crucial to the Northern Ireland land-based sector for two reasons; firstly it can provide a supplementary (as opposed to a diversified) income, especially relevant at present with farm-gate incomes under severe pressure from volatile commodity markets; secondly and most crucially, the local farming industry is becoming increasingly aware of the need to improve efficiencies of on-farm energy usage. Renewable Energy produced on a farm will play a crucial role in reducing greenhouse gas emissions for example.

In light of this, the Ulster Farmers Union is calling on the ETI Committee to take this information into consideration and approve the introduction of a suitable grace period to accompany the closure of the NIRO in 2017.

Yours sincerely,

**Chris Osborne**  
**UFU Senior Policy Officer**