

renewable ni

simple
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Date: 19 January 2016

Cyclo No: 11 /2016

UFU and Small Scale Wind Industry Present to ETI Committee on Closure of Renewable Support Scheme

The Ulster Farmers' Union and small-scale wind energy companies Simple Power, Renewable NI and Wind NI today joined together to present to the Enterprise, Trade and Investment Committee on the early closure of the Northern Ireland Renewables Obligation (NIRO) scheme to new onshore wind generation from 1 April 2016.

The Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment (DETI) have indicated their intention to follow the policy of the Department of Energy and Climate Change (DECC) at Westminster by closing the NIRO a year early – after a Ministerial statement by Jonathan Bell in June 2015 which initially set out that the scheme would be retained until 2017.

The organisations used the opportunity to highlight the unique benefits of the small-scale wind industry to Northern Ireland, not least for farmers and landowners who have been able to derive an additional source of income from renewable energy projects during difficult economic conditions.

The small scale renewable industry has faced huge challenges which have delayed projects, such as grid connection and planning, and an early NIRO closure compounds these issues. The DETI proposals also fail to protect significant investment made, in some cases on the basis of the original position adopted by Minister Bell in June. If enacted into legislation, the early NIRO closure could cost the local farming industry alone at least £20 million through committed planning, consultancy, wildlife survey charges etc.

During the presentation, an alternative approach was put forward by the organisations whereby small-scale and large-scale wind generation could be separated and the closure of the NIRO deferred for small-scale wind until 2018. This would bring the NIRO to a controlled and managed end, provide the best opportunity to secure investments already made and allow existing projects to reach completion at a low cost to the consumer.

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Notes to Editors

1. The absence of any support mechanism to replace the NIRO means that the early closure will have much more severe consequences in NI than in GB where a small scale 'Feed-in Tariff' (FIT) is in operation.
2. The UFU estimate that around 200 of their members will be adversely impacted by the early closure of the NIRO in 2016.
3. The small scale wind industry are calling for the closure of the NIRO to be deferred until 2018 with a 2 year grace period to allow existing project to be completed.
4. A two year deferral of the NIRO closure for small scale wind would require an NI consumer funded scheme. Industry estimates show that, based on an assumption of 200 turbines connecting within this new period, producing 500 MW per annum (at £40 ROCS), additional cost to consumers would be approximately £1.80 per annum on a typical domestic bill and £100 extra per annum on a £20,000 industrial bill.

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