

ULSTER FARMERS' UNION NEWS RELEASE



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UFU meets Environment Minister to discuss new direction for small scale renewables

The Ulster Farmers' Union together with Down District Farmers for Renewable Energy (DDFFRE) has met with Environment Minister Mark H Durkan to discuss the possibility of a new direction for small scale renewables. Present at the meeting was UFU Rural Enterprise Chairman Gary Hawkes and UFU Senior Policy Officer Chris Osborne who along with DDFFRE briefed the Environment Minister on DDFFRE's project which seeks to set up a pilot scheme, in the Bishopscourt/Ardglass (Lecale) area, which would not only provide energy and heat to the local community, bringing social and economic benefit to the local community, but would also become a UK reference site for energy storage and micro-grid technologies.

Commenting on DDFFRE's proposed project Gary Hawkes said; "With the ongoing capacity problems continuing to affect grid connection for small scale renewables in Northern Ireland, the UFU firmly believes that this micro-grid solution being proposed by DDFFRE is an alternative way forward. This pilot project, if successful, could be rolled out to other parts of the country enabling farmers to create community energy networks for their local areas, with much needed storage and distribution solutions."

Mr Hawkes concluded "I am pleased that the Environment Minister undertook to arrange follow-up meetings with the Northern Ireland Environment Agency, to see how Area Planning could be enhanced to accommodate projects such as this one. He has also agreed to look into how his Department could assist rural initiatives around micro-grids and energy storage and how they could support the Invest NI-backed Lecale pilot project."

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Photo Caption: Pictures L-R is Councillor Cadogan Enright; UFU Senior Policy Officer Chris Osborne and Down District Farmers representatives Declan Owens and Alan Montgomery at Stromont to meet with Environment Minister Mark H Durkan

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