

**ULSTER FARMERS' UNION NEWS RELEASE****Date: 23 May 2012****Cyclo No: 58/2012****UFU calls for action on planning for small-scale renewables projects**

The Ulster Farmers' Union are calling on the DOE to deal with the back log of planning applications awaiting decisions in the small scale renewables sector. The UFU says that almost 800 planning applications for small scale wind turbines and 50 Anaerobic Digestion applications are still awaiting a planning decision.

- UFU President Harry Sinclair Said, "With small scale renewables becoming so popular, the numbers entering the planning system are continuing to increase. We are very concerned about the number of renewable planning applications which are back logged in the planning process. As landowners, farmers have the natural resources available which enables them to be ideal providers of small scale renewable energy and we want to capture this opportunity. Given that the cost of fossil fuel power is at an all time high, renewable energy projects are an attractive alternative for farmers. However the set-up and installation process is fraught with frustration and legislative burdens for many and we need to simplify this process".

The UFU has this week written to Environment Minister, Alex Attwood asking for a meeting to explore ways to shift the back log of planning applications awaiting a decision. In the letter the

- UFU has put forward a number of suggestions to improve the process including: specific training for planning service personnel on renewable technologies; increasing the maximum Permitted Development Rights for small scale renewables from 300m<sup>2</sup> to 465m<sup>2</sup>, putting Northern Ireland on a par with England; and the need for a cohesive and joined-up government approach towards renewable energy development.

**ENDS//...****Media Contact:        Deborah Quinn 028 9037 0222**