

ULSTER FARMERS' UNION NEWS RELEASE**Date: 19 July 2012****Cyclo No: 76/2012****UFU meet with Environment Minister to discuss Rural Planning and small-scale renewables projects**

A delegation from the Ulster Farmers' Union, led by UFU President Harry Sinclair, has met with Environment Minister Alex Attwood to discuss the large number of renewable planning applications still awaiting a decision. The UFU also raised concerns regarding DOE Planning Services lack of consideration for health and safety when presenting building site alternatives to farmers to meet PPS21 rules.

- UFU President Harry Sinclair said; "The discussion started with Minister Attwood acknowledging there is a problem with the large number of small scale renewables planning applications in the system still awaiting a decision. Currently, 860 planning applications for small scale wind turbines and around 50 Anaerobic Digestion applications are awaiting a planning decision. The Minister informed the UFU that his Department will do everything they can to shift the back log".

The UFU had a positive discussion with the Minister around a number of issues contributing to the delays in planning decisions including: increasing the maximum Permitted Development Rights for small scale renewable projects; Microwave links; and allowing the clustering of wind turbines on farms.

- Harry Sinclair continued; "At the meeting we also raised concerns regarding the lack of consideration for health and safety by the Planning Service when presenting site alternatives to farmers in order to meet PPS21 criteria. We presented a number of cases to Minister Attwood where farmers have been offered site alternatives which meet the PPS21 criteria but present many health and safety risks that appear grossly impractical and go against the Health and Safety Executives 'Stay Safe' campaign. The UFU have been working hard with HSENI and DARD in an effort to improve farm safety; however we feel this policy is working against it. In the coming months the Minister is to review Planning Policy Statement 21 and the UFU have urged the Minister to put health and safety at the forefront of planning policies".

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Photo Caption: Pictured L-R is UFU Legislation chairman Jason Rankin, UFU Deputy President Barclay Bell, Environment Minister Alex Attwood and UFU President Harry Sinclair.

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