

From: private.office@detini.gov.uk
To: [Mills, John \(DETI\)](#)
Cc: [McLaughlin, Christine \(DETI\)](#); [Hegarty, Damien](#); [Stevenson, Valerie \(DETI Private Office\)](#); [Dolaghan, Paul](#); [McCormick, Andrew \(DETI\)](#); [Kerr, Sean](#); [Rooney, Eugene](#); [Stewart, Chris \(DETI\)](#); [DG DETI Press Office](#); [DETI Energy Mailbox](#)
Subject: COR-0063-2016 : RHI issues
Date: 15 February 2016 10:01:26
Attachments: [Minister Bell 12 Feb 16.doc](#)

Raised By: Ms Heather Thompson
Reference: COR-0063-2016

Subject: COR-0063-2016 : RHI issues

Referred To: JOHN MILLS
Date referred: 15/02/2016

ACTION REQUIRED

Please provide advice and a draft reply for signature by the Minister

To be with private.office@detini.gov.uk not later than 22/02/2016

For further information etc. contact:
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Copied To For Information:
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**National
Trust**

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12 February 2016

DFE-226622

Dear Minister,

Thank you again for taking the time to visit Mount Stewart on 5th February. We were delighted to be able to host you along with representatives from the Confucius Institute and Chinese tour operators. During your visit we focused largely on the National Trust's contribution to tourism in Northern Ireland. However, as a conservation charity we have a much broader range of interests of relevance to your Department.

I write regarding the proposal to close the domestic and non-domestic Renewable Heat Incentive (RHI) in Northern Ireland. It is my understanding that this is largely due to the financial pressure on DETI from costs being higher than anticipated.

We are concerned that a motion to close the RHI will be brought before the Assembly on Monday 15 February and if the motion is passed, the scheme closure would come into effect on 29 February. This is extremely short notice and could leave prospective developers of biomass heating schemes without the support they anticipated. Closing the RHI at such short notice could also make it less likely that the relevant targets for renewable energy will be achieved, notably the targets in the Strategic Energy Framework¹ to have 10% of heating from renewable sources by 2020 and the DUP's own target² to "Promote renewable heat working towards 10% of heat consumed coming from renewable sources by 2020".

Currently, approximately 6% of Northern Ireland's heat demand is supplied by renewable sources, which surpasses the 2011-15 PfG interim target of 4% renewable heat by 2015³. However, if the support via the RHI stops, growth of renewable heat may well stop too. We believe that the RHI has been critical in facilitating the expansion of the renewable heat industry in Northern Ireland to date and we hope that mechanisms can be found to sustain some level of support in the future. We also note the potential significance of the low carbon and environment sector to future employment opportunities, which will also be affected if the RHI is removed completely.

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We are also concerned that the termination of the RHI would leave Northern Ireland out of step with the rest of the UK, where the RHI remains in place until 2020, albeit with a digression mechanism and a cap. We would urge you to seek opportunities to extend the scheme, even if that means the tariffs for new entrants was reduced via a digression mechanism.

The Trust believes that in order to “take advantage of the economic opportunities offered by a low carbon economy”, in line with the DUP’s stated aim⁴, long term planning for energy will be needed, including longer term support schemes for renewable energy like the RHI.

As part of the National Trust’s own targets to reduce energy use by 20% and source 50% of our energy from renewables by 2020/21, the Trust is investing £30 million across England, Wales and Northern Ireland in renewable energy to heat and power more of the historic places we look after. In Northern Ireland we have installed a number of biomass boilers in our properties, including Crom, Springhill, the Giant’s Causeway, Florence Court and Mount Stewart. Some but not all of these projects are in receipt of RHI funds. We have plans to install biomass boilers at Castle Ward, Rowallane Gardens and the Causeway Hotel in future, and we hope some of this will be able to proceed whether or not the RHI scheme continues after this month. I am keen to stress that our concern is not focused on the National Trust’s involvement with the RHI, but a more general interest in low carbon and renewable energy options for society in Northern Ireland. We recognise this is a very challenging issue for your Department, but we hope that you will be able to reach a positive conclusion to the review of this scheme.

Yours sincerely,

Heather Thompson
Director for Northern Ireland

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1. <https://www.detini.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/deti/sef%202010.pdf>
 2. <http://www.mydup.com/policies/environment>
 3. <http://www.northernireland.gov.uk/pfg-2011-2015-final-report.pdf>
 4. <http://www.mydup.com/policies/environment>

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