

VERSION 4**Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment****ASSEMBLY QUESTIONS WRITTEN (AQW)****Due for answer on: Wednesday 24 February 2016****AQW No: 54041/11-16****Put Down By: Mr F McKinney****Political Party: SDLP****Constituency: South Belfast**

Question:

To ask the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment for his assessment of the impact on rural communities of his decision to close the Renewable Heat Incentive Scheme.

Answer:

Heat produced by renewable heat installations incentivised through the non-domestic RHI is used for a wide variety of purposes. However, data relating to Standard Industrial Classification suggests that a large proportion of applications are from industries commonly associated with rural areas, in particular, the poultry sector. Similarly, various factors suggest uptake of the Domestic RHI may be higher in rural areas.

Therefore, it can be assumed that the RHI disproportionately advantages rural households and businesses.

As existing installations will continue to be supported for up to twenty years, bringing around an additional £130 million investment into NI over the next five years to add to the £50 million already supplied under the schemes, this general advantage to rural communities will continue.

There is limited information on installers, however, these businesses are, potentially, more likely to be based in rural areas and closure can be expected to have a negative impact in this sector. Those who hope to avail of the RHI scheme in the future will also be unable to obtain support.

However, as I set out in the plenary debate on The Renewable Heat Incentive Schemes (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2016, keeping the RHI open to new applications would place additional pressure on the Executive's budget from 2016/17. This could have negative impacts for other sectors.

Jonathan Bell MLA
Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment

Date: _____