

Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment**ASSEMBLY QUESTIONS WRITTEN (AQW)**

Due for answer on: Thursday 25 February 2016

AQW No: 54088/11-16

Put Down By: Mr C Lyttle
Political Party: Alliance
Constituency: East Belfast

Question:

To ask the Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment for his assessment of the Action Renewables analysis that his cessation of the Renewable Heat Initiative Scheme will lead to redundancies, substantial financial loss in the local economy and a halt in the uptake of renewable heat; and to outline his policy for the future of renewable energy.

Answer:

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.

The suspension of the scheme will not lead to a loss of government investment in the local economy as existing installations will continue to be supported for twenty years and this will bring around an additional £130 million investment into NI over the next five years to add to the £50 million already supplied under the schemes. However, in contrast to previous years, local funding will have to contribute to paying for the RHI over the next five years.

Assessment of the impact on jobs in the renewable heat sector can only be estimated roughly. However, developing new installations creates more employment than ongoing maintenance so closure can be expected to have a negative impact in that sector. However, keeping open the scheme would consume more of the Executive's resources and could lead to job losses in other sectors.

I am open to suggestions on how we might engage with developers and installers and others to see where we can go in the future to promote renewable heat. This might involve consulting on the long term position, looking at developments in other jurisdictions or considering other options.