

12 – Other Issues

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If there are any other issues which point to significant internal control weaknesses, or other matters arising within the Group which could adversely affect the signing of the six monthly Assurance Statement, details should be provided below.

(1) Staff Resource Pressures - RHI Administration

The Domestic RHI Scheme was launched by the Minister on 9 December 2014. The Business Case for the scheme included an initial additional admin resource of 1 SO (year 1) and a further additional resource (1SO & 1AO) in years 2 and 3 as the number of RHI applications and payments build up. in . To date no additional staff resource has been provided for administering the Domestic RHI Scheme. This has meant that site checks/visits for assurance purposes have had to be reduced and processing of applications is taking longer. The temporary re-location of one SO within the Division has helped however this has ended and a permanent resource is required urgently.

(2) Divisional Staff Resource Pressures

With absences due to Personal information redacted by the RHI Inquiry, the Division is now 3 Staff Officers short (including the RHI SO). This is having a detrimental impact on meeting targets and objectives.

(3) Need for Clarity around AME Budgets for RHI (2015/16 & beyond)

During the first 18 months of the Non-domestic RHI scheme around 130 applications were processed. During 2014/15, a further 470 applications have been received. The NI scheme is currently outperforming the GB scheme with application numbers over the last few months running at 5% of the GB total. This unprecedented increase in uptake over the last 12 months has impacted on our funding requirement with over £20m now forecasted for 2015/16. Despite repeated requests for information from Finance Division (and DFP) The Division has yet to receive any clarity around the maximum available RHI budget going forward. This is essential for future planning in terms of tariff reductions, etc. Without this clarification, both schemes may need to be closed to prevent overspends.