



**From:** Alison Clydesdale  
Renewable Electricity

**Tel No:** 29215

**Date:** 22 June 2015

**cc:** Copy distribution list below

**To:** 1. Timothy Cairns  
2. Jonathan Bell MLA  
3. DARD

**COR/1128/2015 – DARD PART INPUT REQUEST – SMALL SCALE RENEWABLE ENERGY POLICY**

**Issue:** Part input request from DARD regarding correspondence from Ulster Farmers Union in relation to failings in small scale renewable energy policy.

**Timing:** Routine

**Executive Committee Referral:** None

**PFG Implications:** None

**Presentational Issues:** None

**FOI Implications:** Discloseable.

**Financial Implications:** None.

**Legislation Implications:** None.

**Statutory Equality Obligations:** N/A.

**Recommendation:** Reply using the response at Annex A.

**Background**

1. Minister O'Neill has received correspondence from Mr Gary Hawkes, UFU Rural Enterprise Chairman in relation to DARD's small scale renewable energy policy failure in Northern Ireland. DETI has been asked to provide part in relation to renewable electricity policy.
2. Part input has been sought on a range of issues raised in the UFU letter, specifically, transition from the NIRO to a small scale Feed-In Tariff mechanism in 2017, early closure of the NIRO to onshore wind in 2016, the need for alignment with EU and GB policy, grid connection issues and research-based

commercialisation of renewable energy. On this latter issue, briefing has not been provided. The issue is a specific criticism of DARD policy and DETI input is not provided.

**Recommendation**

3. It is recommended that you approve the draft reply at **Annex A** for onward transmission to DARD.

*Alison Clydesdale*

**Alison Clydesdale**  
Renewable Electricity

cc: Andrew McCormick  
Chris Stewart  
John Mills  
Michael Harris  
Michael Blower  
Sean Kerr  
Press Office  
Ian McCrea MLA, APS

**COR/1128/2015 – DRAFT PART INPUT TO DARD FOR RESPONSE TO GARY HAWKES.****Small scale Feed-In Tariff**

It is my understanding that it had been DETI's intention for NI to be included in the existing GB small scale Feed-In Tariff (FIT) mechanism following closure of the Northern Ireland Renewables Obligation (NIRO) in 2017. However, DECC is now undertaking a review of the GB FIT and the outcome of this must be awaited. DECC has committed to including NI in the review, however, there is no commitment to include NI following the review, the outcome of which will not be known until much later this year.

**Early closure of the ROC system**

The DECC Secretary of State did announce on 18 June the early closure of the Renewables Obligation across GB to onshore wind from 1 April 2016. However, the DETI Minister has since assured the onshore wind industry that he has no intention of following the Westminster lead in this regard and that the NIRO will close to all technologies in 2017 as previously stated.

**Policy development aligned with GB and Europe**

Renewable energy policy in NI is already heavily influenced by Whitehall and EU policy. The Renewable Energy Directive has been transposed, where applicable, in NI. There is priority despatch for renewables, biomass sustainability provisions have been introduced to protect the land and we contribute to the UK Member State's renewable energy 2020 targets. Equally, the fact that renewable energy incentivisation costs are socialised across all UK consumers means that renewable energy policy development in Whitehall can have an influence, intentionally or unintentionally, on how we support renewables in NI.

**Grid connection**

We now have more small scale renewables connected to the grid than was ever anticipated. This is a success story. However, we now have a grid trying to cope with this unprecedented growth in small scale which it was never designed for. I am very aware that grid limitations are impacting on the delivery of some renewables projects. I understand that DETI has met with the Regulator, NIE and SONI to impress upon them the need to address these issues. But it would appear there are no easy answers - solutions involving additional investment will impact on consumer bills.