

Energy



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Jim McManus  
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Enterprise, Trade & Investment Committee  
Room 424 Parliament Buildings  
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Dear Jim

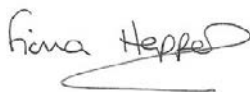
At its meeting on 29 September 2011, ETI Committee members considered correspondence from the Department of Environment in relation to the Renewable Energy Inquiry. Members have asked to receive information on how DETI is working with DOE to ensure the smooth processing of planning applications for renewable heat installations, particularly to ensure that NI can fully take advantage of the renewable heat incentive (RHI), once it is in place.

As members may recall, the proposed Renewable Heat Incentive will incentivise a number of different technologies. Proposed eligible technologies include solid and gaseous biomass, bioliquids, solar thermal, ground and air source heat pumps, on site biogas, geothermal, energy from waste and injection of biomethane into the grid. The deployment of these technologies may have planning implications.

The Department of the Environment has brought forward changes to permitted development rights for domestic microgeneration installations and is currently exploring options for extending these permitted development rights to non-domestic land uses. For installations requiring planning permission, the Department of the Environment's planning policy PPS18 'Renewable Energy' and accompanying Best Practice Guidance promotes the use of renewable energy [and heat] generating facilities in order to achieve Northern Ireland's renewable energy targets and to realise the benefits of renewable energy generally.

DETI and DOE are already collaborating as members of the Sustainable Energy Interdepartmental Working Group (SE IDWG) which exists to ensure a co-ordinated approach across Government to the promotion of sustainable energy. SEIDWG has a number of sub-groups, one of which is the recently constituted Planning and Renewable Energy group. This group is made up of representatives from DETI, DOE, DOE Planning Service and the NIEA. Other stakeholders are invited to participate as required. The remit of the group is to ensure that renewable energy projects and installations are delivered, within the planning system, in time to meet Executive targets. The group is currently considering a number of issues including: the implications of the Planning Act 2011; the implementation of the Renewable Energy Directive and development of a Memorandum of Understanding between DETI and DOE.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Fiona Hepper". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long horizontal flourish at the end.

**FIONA HEPPER**  
Director, Energy Division