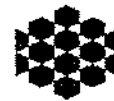


From the Office of the Minister



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Alban Maginness MLA
ETI Committee Chair
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13th June 2011

Dear Chair,

**ONSHORE RENEWABLE ELECTRICITY ACTION PLAN AND ASSOCIATED
STRATEGIC ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT**

You will be aware that a key target for Northern Ireland, set out in the Strategic Energy Framework, is to increase the level of electricity consumption from renewable sources to 40% by 2020, a challenging target and a step change from the current target of 12% by 2012.

In response to this, my Department is currently undertaking a Strategic Environmental Assessment of the Onshore Renewable Electricity Action Plan (OREAP). The OREAP aims to maximise the amount of renewable electricity generated from on shore renewable sources in order to enhance diversity and security of supply, reduce carbon emissions, contribute to the 40% renewable electricity target by 2020 and beyond and develop business and employment opportunities for Northern Ireland companies. The OREAP relates only to onshore or terrestrial renewable electricity, but it will also consider the impact of both onshore and offshore renewable energy development on the onshore transmission and distribution network.

The environmental assessment is nearing completion and the results will be incorporated into the draft OREAP in due course along with the finalisation of the accompanying environmental report. We aim to issue these documents, along with a Regulatory Impact Assessment, which considers the socio-economic impacts of increasing levels of renewable electricity, for public consultation over the summer with a view to formally adopting the OREAP by the end of the year.

I will, of course, ensure that copies of these documents are sent to the Committee. However this may be during the summer recess. I therefore enclose for the Committee's information, an update paper highlighting progress to date and next steps.

Yours sincerely

ARLENE FOSTER MLA
Minister of Enterprise, Trade and Investment