



**Northern Ireland
Assembly**

COMMITTEE FOR ENTERPRISE, TRADE AND INVESTMENT

MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS

**THURSDAY, 24 NOVEMBER 2011
ROOM 30, PARLIAMENT BUILDINGS**

- Present: Mr Alban Maginness (Chairperson)
Mr Daithí McKay (Deputy Chairperson)
Mr Steven Agnew
Mr Gordon Dunne
Mr Phil Flanagan
Mr Paul Frew
Mr Stephen Moutray
Mr Mike Nesbitt
- In Attendance: Mr Jim McManus (Assembly Clerk)
Ms Sohui Yim (Assistant Assembly Clerk)
Mr David McKee (Clerical Supervisor)
Ms Michelle McDowell (Clerical Officer)
- Apologies: Dr Alasdair McDonnell
Mr Robin Newton
Ms Sue Ramsey

The meeting began at 10.22am in public session.

1. Apologies

Apologies are detailed above.

2. Minutes of meeting held on 17 November 2011

Agreed: The draft minutes of the meeting on 17 November were agreed.

Members discussed the seriousness of the current situation regarding late papers from the Department for substantive items on the Committee's agenda.

Members expressed disappointment and regret regarding meeting papers from the Department not arriving in time to be included in members' packs earlier in the week, as it significantly impairs the Committee's ability to scrutinise/challenge/support the policies/work of the Department.

3. Chairperson's Business

Members noted an invitation to the Chair, Deputy Chair and Research and Development inquiry rapporteur, Robin Newton from the Committee for OFMDFM to an EU issues discussion forum on Monday 5 December 2011.

Daithí McKay joined the meeting at 10.25am.

Members noted an invitation from Energy Ireland to the Major Energy Conference on Wednesday 14 December 2011.

Members noted an invitation from Agenda NI to an Agriculture and Food Seminar on Thursday 1 December 2011.

The Chair informed members that he will be writing to the Chair of the Oireachtas Joint Committee on Communications, Natural Resources and Agriculture to thank him for the warm welcome received when the Committee visited.

The Chair welcomed Paul Frew MLA to the Committee.

4. Matters Arising

Members discussed a draft response to the Committee for Finance and Personnel on the outcome of the consultation on the proposed large retail levy and the extension of the small business rate relief scheme.

Agreed: Content with the response and to forward the response to the Committee for Finance and Personnel.

Members discussed a draft letter to two former employees of the Social Economy Network in relation to closure of the SEN.

Agreed: Content with the letter and to send the letter to the former employees.

Members discussed a letter from the Minister to the Financial Secretary to the Treasury, Mark Hoban MP regarding credit unions and FSA policy proposals.

Agreed: To forward the letter to the Irish League of Credit Unions and the Ulster Federation of Credit Unions.

Members discussed a draft letter to the NI Oil Federation in relation to the Committee's consideration of the Office of Fair Trading report into off-grid energy markets, along with the press release that was issued.

Agreed: Content with the letter and to send the letter to the NI Oil Federation.

5. Consultation on proposed changes to NIRO in 2012

Members discussed the written briefing.

Agreed: To ask the Department for details of the differences in the proposed banding in the NIROC versus the GBROC.

Mike Nesbitt declared an interest as an owner of a wind turbine.

Agreed: To ask the Department why small scale renewable generation could not be included in the overall Feed-in Tariff Contract for Difference and why a separate small scale Feed-in Tariff would have to be introduced.

Agreed: To receive an oral briefing from the Department on the issue once the consultation has ended.

6. Onshore Renewable Electricity Action Plan

Members discussed the written briefing.

Agreed: To receive a summary of the outcomes of the consultation when it has ended.

7. Gas network extension – Update on consultation

Members discussed the written briefing.

Phil Flanagan joined the meeting at 10.35am.

Agreed: To ask the Department how/when it will determine the best way forward in relation to the areas for extension, how it will be financed and how the licensing of the areas will be determined.

Agreed: To be kept informed of all major updates as the project progresses and request a timeline of the project when it is available.

8. Update on progress of the recommendations in the Renewable Energy Inquiry report

Members discussed the written briefing.

Agreed: Stephen Agnew to report back to the Committee regarding whether a RoI report on underground cabling is in the public domain.

Daithí McKay left the meeting at 10.45am.

9. Grid Strengthening & Second North/South Interconnector

Members noted the response from the Department to the Committee for Environment regarding the North/South Interconnector.

Members noted that there was not a Departmental briefing paper for the item and that it is expected for a future meeting.

10. Electricity Market Reform (EMR) – Implications for Northern Ireland

Members discussed the written briefing.

Agreed: To schedule an oral briefing with DETI officials regarding the EMR early next year, when the NIRO consultation has ended and more will be known about Northern Ireland's position.

11. Update on the progress of a Renewable Heat Incentive (RHI)

DETI Officials joined the meeting at 10.50am.

Daithí McKay re-joined the meeting at 10.51am.

Members received an oral briefing from Fiona Hepper, Head of Energy Division, Joanne McCutcheon, Principal, Sustainable Energy and Peter Hutchinson, Deputy Principal, Sustainable Energy, DETI. Key issues discussed included a summary of the responses from the RHI consultation, potential design of an RHI scheme and the administration of an RHI in Northern Ireland.

Agreed: To receive details on the development of AD in Northern Ireland since the NIROC was increased for the technology and the extent and scale of the AD market.

Stephen Moutray left the meeting at 11.08am.

Gordon Dunne joined the meeting at 11.15am.

Agreed: To receive a copy of the feasibility study that will be done on the RHI.

Daithí McKay left the meeting at 11.37am.

DETI Officials left the meeting at 11.45am.

12. Correspondence

Members noted the following items of correspondence:

- i. Briefing paper on the Annual Northern Ireland Energy Forum.
- ii. Response from DETI regarding:
 - a. The Fermanagh Seaplane Festival
 - b. Petroleum Licensing in Fermanagh

Daithí McKay re-joined the meeting at 11.47am.

Agreed: To forward the response to the Committee for the Environment.

Agreed: Chair and Deputy Chair to meet with Minister on issues relating to hydraulic fracturing and to invite the Minister to next week's Committee meeting to discuss the issue.

- c. InterTradeIreland report on the agri-food sector

Agreed: Committee Office to circulate the report to members.

- d. JEREMIE initiative

- iii. Letter to the Chair from the Minister of Health, Social Services and Public Safety regarding Individual Building Data for energy performance.

Agreed: To note at this time and revisit at a future meeting.

- iv. Correspondence from Committees regarding:
 - a. Finance and Personnel regarding Performance and Efficiency Delivery Unit (PEDU).

Agreed: To write to the Department regarding retained corporate functions.

- b. Finance and Personnel regarding Post Project Evaluations (PPEs).

Agreed: To forward the information to the Department and ask the status of DETI's outstanding PPEs.

- c. Agriculture and Rural Development regarding that Committee's Priorities.

- d. Employment and Learning regarding Training for Success.

- e. Environment regarding Renewable Fuel Targets.

Agreed: To forward to the Department for response.

- v. Proposals from Energy-saver NI Ltd on Voltage Optimisation.

Agreed: To forward the papers to the Department and the Utility Regulator for comments.

- vi. Invitation from NI Electricity Limited to Craigavon Control Centre to hold a Committee visit to its facility.

Agreed: To hold this visit next year.

- vii. Letter to the Chair from the WWF regarding the UK Positive Energy Report

- viii. Letter to the Chair from the Chairperson's Liaison Group regarding the use of the Rapporteur.

- ix. Letter from NIPSA to the Speaker, copied to the Chair, regarding strike action on 30 November.

13. Any other business

Members discussed the draft forward work programme for the remainder of the year.

Agreed: Content with the forward work programme.

Members discussed the draft Economic Strategy.

Agreed: For this Committee to coordinate responses from other Committee's on the draft Economic Strategy.

14. Date, time and place of next meeting

The next meeting of the Committee will take place on **Thursday 1 December at 10.30am, Invest NI, 1 Bedford Square, Bedford Street, Belfast.**

The Chair adjourned the meeting at 12.22pm.

Mr Alban Maginness
Chair
Committee for Enterprise, Trade and Investment

1 December 2011