

Ok. I think FM is a v v big chicken farmer.

Can you do a fact check on this?

1) the RHI policy received cross-party support at the Assembly when it was introduced in 2012. That means the policy of having a separate NI RHI scheme was endorsed by parties now criticising it. The rationale for a separate policy was the different market here, with a greater reliance on oil.

2) DETI committee chair Patsy McGlone couldn't have been clearer on the cross-party support for the RHI policy, telling the Assembly in October 2012: "The Committee scrutiny of the development of the renewable heat incentive has been considerable and reflects the importance and long-term nature of the proposals. Before supporting the RHI, the Committee sought and received assurances on incentive and tariff levels, banding levels, incentives for domestic consumers, payments to participants and support levels for the renewable heat premium payment scheme."

<http://www.niassembly.gov.uk/globalassets/documents/official-reports/plenary/2012-13/aims-hansard-20121022213141531.pdf>

3) The key failing at the heart of this whole saga is detailed in the NI Audit Office report of July 2016 (paragraphs 34 and 35).

It explains that consultants introduced an RHI subsidy payment rate for boilers that was higher than the cost of wood pellets. The Audit Office records that DETI incorrectly reported in the 2012 business case for RHI that there was no need to consider cost tiering controls "because the rate proposed was lower than the cost of fuel and therefore there would be no incentive to abuse the system by generating heat just to claim the subsidy". This fundamental mistake informed the administration of the system over the best part of three years. It is ludicrous to try to blame any politician for this error.

4) When Arlene Foster was DETI Minister there was a £15m underspend on RHI. She received no advice from officials on introducing cost controls. When demand subsequently spiralled, tiering was introduced by her successor in November 2015 and the scheme was closed in early 2016. UUP, SDLP, Alliance and TUV MLAs all voted against closure – despite being warned they were voting for open-ended cost escalation.

5) There is no doubt this has been a shocking failure by the Government system. The challenge is now is to start putting it right.