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**From:** McGettrick, John  
**Sent:** 09 September 2016 10:31  
**To:** TEO PS Ministers  
**Cc:** TEO HOCS; Gardner, Jeremy; Wallwin, Judith; Coleman, Roisin; Parkhill, Laura; Monaghan, Kathy; Browne, Mark (Deputy Secretary); Godfrey, Katrina (TEO); Grimason, Stephen; McNabb, Chris; Johnston, Timothy; Brimstone, Stephen; Bullick, Richard; Weir, Philip, TEO SpAd; Mullan, Mark; O'Hagan, Dara; Loughran, John; TEO PSDirectorPFG; Reynolds, Joe; Johnston, Peter; Lennon, Louise; Brown, Joanna; McConville, Stephen (TEO); Edgar, Leona; Bodkin, Maurice; McLaughlin, Mark (TEO); Smith, Jodi; Perry, David (TEO); McCourt, John; Fullerton, Karen; TEO EIS MinisterialCases; TEO Programme For Government  
**Subject:** INV-1381-2016 : Request to meet First Minister and deputy First Minister regarding an investment of up to £26 million in a renewable energy project by McGuckian Farms Biomass Power  
**Attachments:** INV 1381 2016 McGuckian s Farm Biomass advice and reply.tr5; INV-1381-2016 - to FM & dFM.PDF; INV13812016 McGuckians Farm Biomass advice and reply.DOCX

PS Ministers

INV/1381/2016 briefing cleared by Peter Johnston

Thanks

John

John McGettrick  
Economics Branch  
The Executive Office  
Castle Buildings  
Stormont Estate  
Belfast  
BT4 3SR

Tel: 02890523467 (Ext 23467)

-----Original Message-----

From: [ps.ministers@ofmdfmni.gov.uk](mailto:ps.ministers@ofmdfmni.gov.uk) [<mailto:ps.ministers@ofmdfmni.gov.uk>]

Sent: 06 September 2016 10:27

To: Reynolds, Joe

Cc: Vernon, Gary; Edgar, Leona; Bodkin, Maurice; McCourt, John; Perry, David (TEO); Fullerton, Karen; McLaughlin, Mark (TEO); Smith, Jodi; Godfrey, Katrina (TEO); Simpson, Geoffrey; Osborne, Ruth; Drennan, Nicola; Bradley, John; McGaffin, Anne; Lennon, Louise; TEO Programme For Government; Morrow, Carol; Brown, Joanna; TEO DSC Team; Johnston, Peter; Bullick, Richard; Willis, Gerard; Fowler, Liz; McKibbin, Gail; Grimason, Stephen; Wright, Johnny; Sharkey, Charlene; Harrison, Julie (FM Private Office); Johnston, Heather; Reynor, Stephanie; Hylands, Brian; Gardner, Jeremy; Coleman, Roisin; Monaghan, Kathy; O'Neill, Jennifer; Wallwin, Judith; McLaughlin, Mark (TEO); Savage, Mandy; TEO HOCS; Parkhill, Laura; McNabb, Chris; Mullan, Mark; Kerr, Kevin; O'Hagan, Dara; Loughran, John  
Subject: INV-1381-2016 : Request to meet First Minister and deputy First Minister regarding an investment of up to £26 million in a renewable energy project by McGuckian Farms Biomass Power

Raised By: Mr Liam McGuckian

Reference: INV-1381-2016

Subject: INV-1381-2016 : Request to meet First Minister and deputy First Minister regarding an investment of up to £26 million in a renewable energy project by McGuckian Farms Biomass Power

Referred To: JOE REYNOLDS

Date Referred: 06/09/2016

Attached DFE input

Regards,  
Alexandra Navalli  
Central Correspondence Unit  
88029

Copied To For Input:

Press Officers

Copied To For Information:

Godfrey, Katrina (TEO); Simpson, Geoffrey; Osborne, Ruth; Drennan, Nicola; Bradley, John; McGaffin, Anne; Lennon, Louise; TEO Programme For Government; Morrow, Carol; Brown, Joanna; TEO DSC Team; Johnston, Peter; cc INV

**Shanks, Mark**

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**From:** Rogan, Joe  
**Sent:** 19 August 2016 14:47  
**To:** TEO PS Ministers  
**Cc:** TEO Info  
**Subject:** FW: Cloughmills wood to energy project £26 million investment.

**Folks**

Please see request for meeting.

Regards

*Joe Rogan*

**Machinery of Government  
Executive Office  
Room BD 20  
Stormont Castle  
Belfast  
BT4 3TT**

**Tel: 028 90378055 Int: (88055)**

**e mail: [joe.rogan@executiveoffice-ni.gov.uk](mailto:joe.rogan@executiveoffice-ni.gov.uk)**

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**From:** McGuckian Milling [<mailto:office@mcguckianmilling.co.uk>]  
**Sent:** 19 August 2016 14:33  
**To:** Rogan, Joe  
**Subject:** Cloughmills wood to energy project £26 million investment.

Good afternoon Joe,

Thank you for replying to my email . I understand that our proposal will be going to the new energy department . We have been dealing with the old department DETI for well over a year. There has been much communication between Seamus Hughes( formerly DETI) and our principal driver of the project Dr. John O' Shea who has been at the forefront of similar projects namely Balcas and Invergordon in Scotland to name a few.

Crucially to our project we have been trying to get figures for RHI's and ROC's from this department for a very long time and we feel that this must be addressed immediately otherwise the investment from the green bank (Foresight) may be lost. Northern Ireland can ill afford to miss opportunities like this and I think this proposal should be brought to the attention of Arlene Foster and Martin McGuinness. If I were an American with an investment like this I'd be welcomed with open arms.

Whilst being directed to the appropriate department is fine, we feel we have spent enough time in their offices and we think in light of size of the investment and the high number of jobs created both in construction and the many other ancillary jobs thereafter, we would welcome a short meeting with the offices of the first and deputy first ministers.

I look forward to hearing from you,  
Kind regards,

Liam McGuckian.

Office 02827638677

Mobile Personal information redacted by the RFI

**Shanks, Mark**

---

**From:** Liam McGuckian [liam@mcguckianmilling.co.uk]  
**Sent:** 24 August 2016 12:05  
**To:** TEO PS Ministers  
**Cc:** IES  
**Subject:** FW: Presentation Report £26million investment. URGENT  
**Attachments:** McGuckian Farms Biomass Power Information.pdf

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**From:** Liam McGuckian  
**Sent:** 24 August 2016 12:01  
**To:** Liam McGuckian <liam@mcguckianmilling.co.uk>  
**Subject:** FW: Presentation Report £26million investment. URGENT

Dear First Ministers,

I have been directed by your private secretary to formally apply for a face to face meeting with yourselves regarding an investment of up to £26 million in a renewable energy project producing renewable energy in the form of wood pellets. This would involve 150 construction workers initially for eighteen months, and possibly 100 sustainable incomes thereafter.

After two years of hard work and much expenditure we have crossed many hurdles, one last crucial part of the jigsaw is the position of the government on the green credits. DETI now DfE have been unable to tell us what is going to happen with them.

Representatives of Foresight, a branch of the green bank are coming over to Cloughmills in early September for discussions on indicative investment terms, and it would be crucial that the government's position on the green credits would be known so that the whole project can move forward in a confident manner. There may be other solutions to our problem that can be discussed at the meeting.

Looking forward to having a productive meeting with you

Kind regards Liam McGuckian

P.S. The following would like to be at the meeting.

Barney McGuckian

Colin Newall

Dr. John O' Shea.



**Boyle, Pauline**

---

**From:** Liam McGuckian [liam@mcguckianmilling.co.uk]  
**Sent:** 23 August 2016 10:46  
**To:** TEO PS Ministers  
**Subject:** FW: Presentation Report £26million investment. URGENT  
**Attachments:** McGuckian Farms Biomass Power Information.pdf

**Categories:** Pauline

Dear Kevin, thank you for taking my call. I have attached information as discussed.

Kind Regards,

Liam McGuckian

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**From:** Liam McGuckian  
**Sent:** 19 August 2016 13:41  
**To:** 'info@executiveoffice-ni.gov.uk' <info@executiveoffice-ni.gov.uk>  
**Subject:** FW: Presentation Report £26million investment. URGENT

Good afternoon,  
 I am resending this email from yesterday and I request a read receipt please,  
 Kind regards Liam McGuckian.

---

**From:** Liam McGuckian  
**Sent:** 18 August 2016 14:35  
**To:** 'info@executiveoffice-ni.gov.uk' <info@executiveoffice-ni.gov.uk>  
**Subject:** FW: Presentation Report £26million investment. URGENT  
**Importance:** High

Good afternoon Arlene and Martin,  
 I hope you can take the time to read my email and the attachment. For over two years now we have been working on this project and have surmounted many hurdles along the way, all at our own considerable financial expense and time. We engaged with all our local MLA's Robert Swann, John Dallat, and Daithi McKay all who gave their wholehearted support for the project and they all helped to hasten planning approval. As well as full planning approval we have sourced long term contracts with forestry people here in Ireland and on the west coast of Scotland for renewable sources of wood, wood pellet consumption is growing exponentially here in Ireland, and we have an offer of up to £26 million from foresight which is a branch of the green bank in the UK. The one thing that we do not have is certainty over the green credits that are going to be available in N.Ireland. Rhi's and Roc's We have asked Deti for an answer for some time but without success. Representatives of the green bank are coming over to Cloughmills on the 13<sup>th</sup> of September for a meeting with us. It would greatly enhance our position if we were able to certify what we could be guaranteed by way of green credits. This would give a boost in confidence to everyone involved, and does require an urgent response in order to proceed. I hope you both enjoy reading the presentation report and I look forward to hearing from you both very soon,

Kind regards to both of you, on behalf of the team here in Cloughmills

Yours Liam McGuckian.

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**From:** IES [mailto:Personal information redacted by the RHI Inquiry]  
**Sent:** 16 August 2016 13:20  
**To:** Liam McGuckian <liam@mcguckianmilling.co.uk>

**Subject: Presentation Report**  
**Importance: High**

Dear Liam

Please find attached the presentation report as requested.

Kind regards,

**Elizabeth**

***PA To Dr John O'Shea***

**Integrated Energy Systems International Limited**

**11a Lune Street**

**Preston**

**PR1 2NL**

**Tel: 00 44 1772 250707**

**Fax: 00 44 1772 258322**

**Email:** Personal information redacted by the RHI Inquiry

**[www.iesiltd.co.uk](http://www.iesiltd.co.uk)**



**Subject:** Presentation Report  
**Importance:** High

Dear Liam

Please find attached the presentation report as requested.

Kind regards,

**Elizabeth**

*PA To Dr John O'Shea*

Integrated Energy Systems International Limited

11a Lune Street

Preston

PR1 2NL

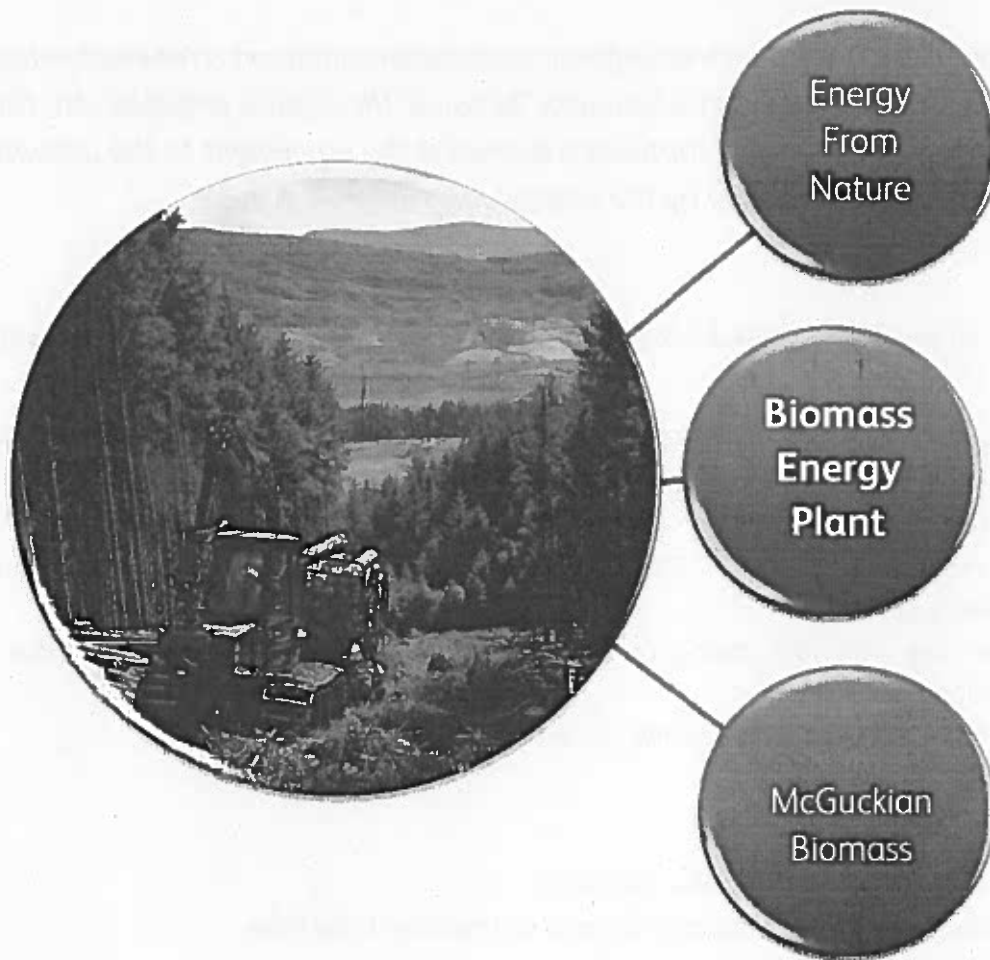
Tel: 00 44 1772 250707

Fax: 00 44 1772 258322

Email: Personal information redacted by the RHI Inquiry

[www.iesiltd.co.uk](http://www.iesiltd.co.uk)





# McGuckian Farm Biomass Energy Plant

Cloughmills, Co. Antrim, Northern Ireland

## The Benefits of Biomass Energy

*'Biomass is any plant-derived organic material available on a renewable basis & is often termed as 'carbon neutral' because the carbon released into the atmosphere when the material is burned is the equivalent to the amount absorbed by the plant during its growth cycle.'*

Over its' 30 year lifetime, the 2.3 MW & 11 tonnes / hour pelleting biomass green energy plant at McGuckian Farms will:

- Produce 90,000 tonnes a year of climate friendly wood pellets made from local & other resources for use as a fuel in power stations, businesses & homes
- Save the need to import oil
- Save the emission of over 170,000 tonnes of carbon dioxide (the main greenhouse gas) every year
- Create over 150 jobs during construction and over 100 permanent local jobs in operation and fuel supply
- The site will play a role in reducing CO<sub>2</sub> emissions in the region

### ***Facts about Biomass Energy***

- No carbon footprint, renewable and clean.
- Biomass energy reduces our over-reliance on imported fossil fuels
- The life span of a biomass plant is 30 years
- The buildings are made of concrete and steel and are generally painted matt grey to minimise reflection & visual impact but can be coloured as necessary to fit into the surrounding areas.
- Modern biomass plants are not noisy – you can hold a conversation outside the turbine hall without having to raise your voice
- Biomass energy creates local jobs in fuel supply, construction and maintenance
- Biomass energy strengthens the local electrical infrastructure as an imbedded generator
- When the plant reaches the end of its' working life after 30 years, it can be re-powered for a further 30 years
- Biomass energy will provide clean, local renewable energy for the locality



**Overall Project Outline & Mission**

The following is envisaged for the site at McGuckian Farms:

- A 90,000 tonnes / year wood pelleting plant
- A solid biomass co-generation plant generating 2.3 MWe of electricity and 11 MWth of heat

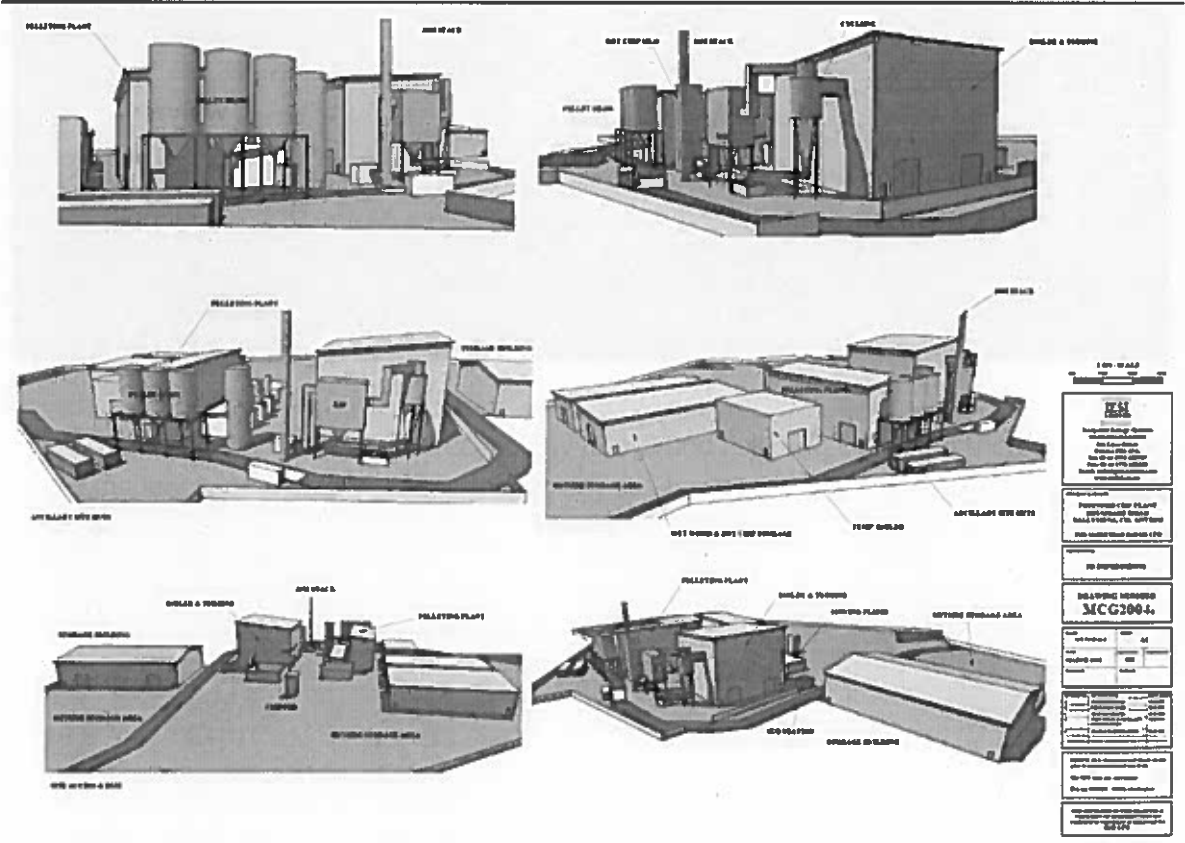
The mission is to integrate the biomass projects to maximise the heat, power usage and produce pellets;

- To provide sustainable jobs
- To provide sustainable energy supply

**Project Overview**

The Green Energy Biomass Plant at McGuckian Farms will be located on the existing 140 acre farm in Cloughmills, Co. Antrim which has an animal feed plant of between 20-30 tonnes / hour, a 28,000 pig / year production and 2 x 250 kWe wind turbine generators. The wood pellet plant is considered to be a complimentary and logical extension to the animal feed milling processes currently carried out on site and is part of an ongoing process of farm diversification.

The Animal Feed Plant is a similar technology to a Wood Pelleting Plant and there is over 30 year experience of operating this technology. The Wind Turbine / Generators is an experience in Electrical Power Generation.



The facility will be a high efficiency combined heat and power plant generating 'Green Electricity' which will complement the manufacture of carbon-neutral wood pellets, a 'green' renewable fuel for power stations and other industrial, commercial and domestic energy markets. The pellets can also be used for animal bedding.

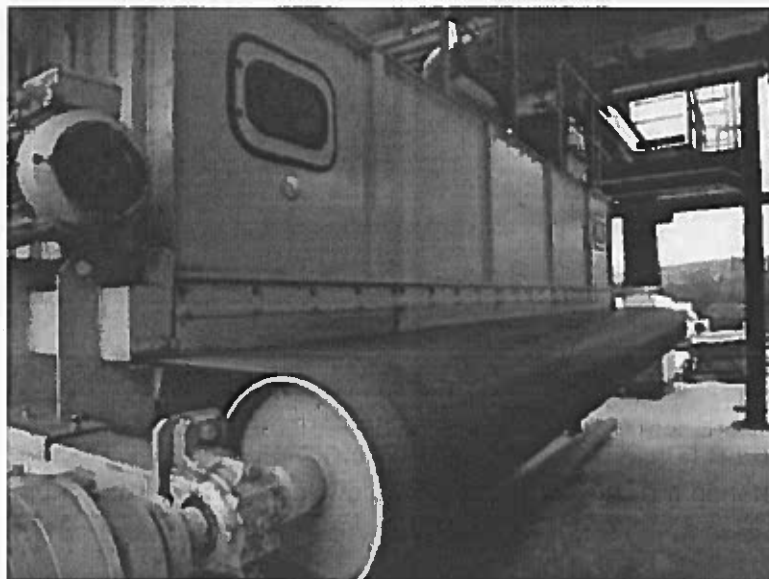
The boiler will be fuelled from locally sourced clean biomass, including virgin timber and forestry residues in the form of small round wood with diameters of 7.5 cm up to 45 cm diameters and lengths of 3 metres delivered directly to site and processed by debarking and chipping. The wood will be supplied from the border areas of the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland mainly as Spruce. Some wood will be imported from the West Coast of Scotland (up to 50,000 tonnes / year) but of the 200,000 tonnes / year of forest wood required, it will be mainly sourced from Ireland.



The process will consist of a wood processor of 30 tonnes / hr capacity to debark and chip the forest wood of 7.5 up to 40 cm diameter and 3 m lengths into white chips of 10 mm sizing suitable for supplying to a Belt Dryer using hot-air for drying at under 100°C.



A Wood Dryer to reduce the moisture content from 55% to 10% and suitable for pelleting. The heating medium for the dryer is hot water raised from the steam generator in the forest wood fired boiler. The dryer has the capacity for up to 12 tonnes / hour of dried wood.



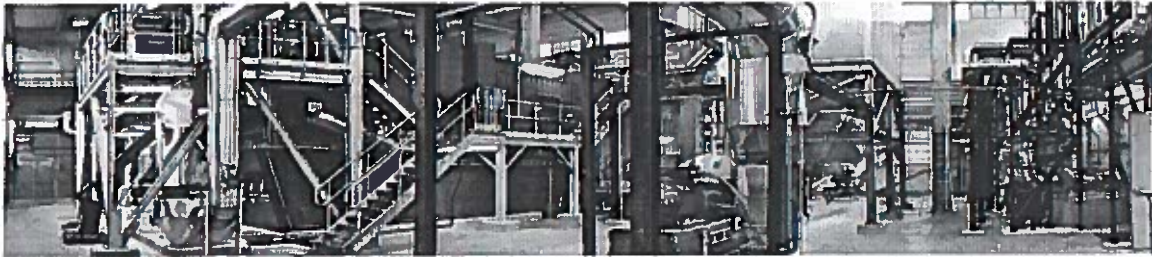
The wood pelleting plant will consist of

- 2 x 20 tonnes / hour Wet Hammer Mills
- 2 x 5.5 tonnes / hour Dry Hammer Mills.
- 3 x 5 tonnes / hour Wood Pelletisers.
- Ambient Air Pellet Cooler.
- Silo Storage with 30 tonnes lorry loading facility
- 3 x 120 tonne Silos
- An 8 tonnes / hour pellet bagging plant
- A typical sizing will be 20 litres / bag.
- The density of the pellet is 700 kg/cu.m
- Wet Wood Storage Facility of 5,000 tonnes capacity.

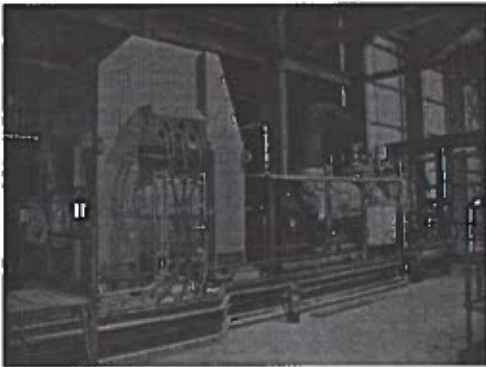




A 16,000 kgs / hour forest wood fired Super-Heated Steam Combi Boiler using a water cooled stepped grate for combustion to generate steam of approximately 385°C temperature and 29.5 bar.a. with a capacity of 16 tonnes / hour. The boiler will be fuelled by wood received directly on site.



The steam is then reduced in pressure and temperature and piped to a multi-stage Steam-Turbine down to 1.5 bar.a. and 112°C. It is then condensed to water at just under 110°C and returned at 95°C. The heat produced is used in the dryer and the Pelletiser.



The steam turbine / generator will be synchronous and can operate in isolation or in parallel with the Grid. The preferred method of operation will be in parallel with the grid. The Generator will generate 2,300 kW of electricity and will also supply back-pressure steam of 15 tonnes / hour with a back pressure of 1.5 bar.a.. The majority of the output

will be used to supply the site electricity to the existing animal feed mill, the wood processor, the boiler and turbine auxiliaries as well as the pelleting plant.

The Green Energy Biomass Plant is being developed by and in conjunction with IESI Ltd, the engineering design consultants who have an enviable record of successful experience in energy management & technology and have extensive renewable energy expertise and have developed similar biomass projects in Northern Ireland, UK and Europe.



***Build Time & Construction***

- Build time would be 20 months.
- Work is anticipated to begin in the last quarter of 2016 having gained unanimous planning permission in March 2016 and will be employing around 150 people during the construction phase of the plant.
- The proposal will create significant benefits for the area including about 100 new jobs for the local community with benefits also for rural communities through the management of local woodlands and forests supporting the pellet manufacturing process.
- The Green Energy Biomass Plant has an operational life of 30 years. At the end of its life, the plant can be re-powered.



***Biomass Energy creates local jobs in fuel supply, construction & maintenance***

***Grid Connection***

- There will be an electrical connection to the local NIE Network of 2,000 kVA import supply and a possible managed export capacity of up to 1,000 kWe.



***Biomass Energy  
strengthens the  
local electrical***



**Transport, Access & Roads**

Trucks will transport the biomass raw material fuels to the existing site using the industrial estate roads. Wood Pellets will be transported from the site for onward sales. It is estimated that around 15 truck movements per day will be the average transport impact.



The pellets would be sold into the following markets:

- Animal bedding (horses & cats)
- Domestic boiler house heating
- Industrial boiler fuel
- Power station co-firing

**Planning Permission, Emissions & Licensing**

The biomass plant at Cloughmills will be a modern renewable green energy development set in 12 acres of a 140 acre private farm saving greenhouse gas emissions using the best available technology.

We have been in discussions with local authorities & the Environment Agency and the plant will be designed to have a minimal environmental impact. Planning permission was received in March 2016.

The plant has been excused the need for an environmental Permit from the Environment Agency in compliance with the Pollution Prevention and Control Regulations on the following grounds:

- The thermal capacity of the plant is less than 20 MWth
- We are using uncontaminated forest wood as a fuel



<b>Boiler</b>	
NOx	≤ 270 mg/N.cu.m
CO	≤150 mg/N.cu.m
VOC	≤50 mg/N.cu.m
Particulate	≤25 mg/N.cu.m
<b>Dryer</b>	
Particulate	≤10 mg / N.cu.m (there is no combustion with the dryer).

These are based on 11 % O<sub>2</sub> by value with dry flue gases

***Green Certificates***

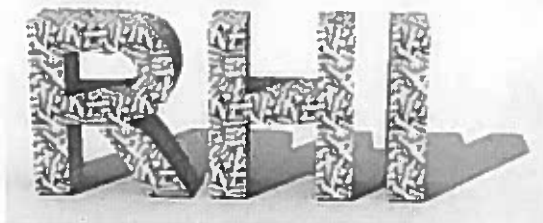
The CHPQA have certified the plant is eligible for ROCs.

However, presently it is necessary to have the plant operational by

March 2017 to receive ROCs. We wish to receive a Grace Period of one year to take us to March 2018 which would then qualify us for ROCs worth £1,000,000 / year over 15 years based on 1.5 ROCs per MWhe of electricity generated.

***RHI (Renewable Heat Incentive)***

We have applied for the RHI before the end of February 2016 and are still awaiting full accreditation which DETI state could be available in September 2016. This has a value of £3,000,000 / year for 20 years.



Without these accreditations and no capital grants being available, it would be difficult to proceed with the investment.

***Capital Cost***

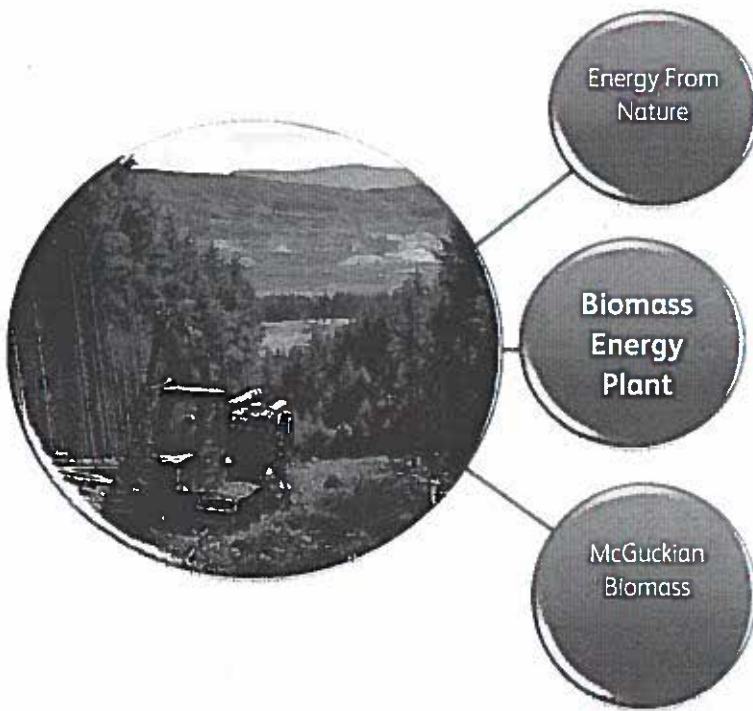
The capital cost of the total investment is £26,000,000.

***Funding***

Heads of Terms have been received from the Foresight Banking Group of London to fund the whole development.

***Development Position***

The development position is that the project is nearly ready for implementation but is awaiting clearance from DETI with regards to the certainty of the RHI and ROCs which was not an issue when work on the development commenced over two years ago.



**McGuckian Farms Biomass Energy Plant**

29 Drumbare Road  
Cloughmills, Co. Antrim  
Northern Ireland

Email:  
office@mcguckianmilling.co.uk

**Plant Design Consultants**

Integrated Energy Systems  
International Limited

11a Lune Street, Preston,  
Lancashire, PR1 2NL

Tel: 01772 250707

Email: Personal information redacted by the RHI Inquiry

[www.iesiltd.co.uk](http://www.iesiltd.co.uk)

**FROM: PETER JOHNSTON**

**DATE: 9 SEPTEMBER 2016**

**TO: PS/FIRST MINISTER  
PS/DEPUTY FIRST MINISTER**

**Copy Distribution List Below**

**INV/1381/2016: INVITE TO THE FIRST MINISTER AND DEPUTY FIRST MINISTER TO MEET TO DISCUSS THE PROPOSED MCGUCKIAN FARM BIOMASS ENERGY PROJECT**

- |                                                              |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
|--------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1. Inv No.                                                   | INV/1381/2016                                                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| 2. Invitation from:                                          | Mr Liam McGuckian                                                                                                                                                                                                                                        |
| 3. Event/Meeting:                                            | Invitation for the First Minister and deputy First Minister to meet Mr McGuckian to discuss the proposed Biomass Energy Plant at McGuckian Farm in Cloughmills.                                                                                          |
| 4. Venue:                                                    | TBC                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| 5. Date of Event/Meeting:                                    | TBC                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| 6. Range of dates if applicable                              |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
| 7. Recommendation if Minister should attend or meet          | The First Minister and deputy First Minister should <b>decline</b> this invitation.                                                                                                                                                                      |
| 8. Press Office advice                                       | This correspondence has the potential to generate media interest. In the event of any media enquiries, EIS will agree lines to take with Special Advisors and officials.                                                                                 |
| 9. Reasons to accept/decline the invitation (if appropriate) | DfE officials have been in ongoing discussion with the McGuckians about the proposed project and a meeting with FM and dFM at this point would not serve any useful purpose in taking the project forward. DfE recommend Ministers decline this request. |

10. Any other relevant information relating to the event/meeting.

The proposed project in the Cloughmills area would create around 150 jobs during the construction phase and in the order of 100 jobs thereafter. The main output from the proposed plant is wood pellets and in that regard it would become a key supplier of biomass fuel on the local market. This project is to be financed by a £26m loan from the Foresight Bank but it would appear the project is dependent on securing payments under the RHI and NIRO and the bank is therefore seeking assurances around RHI/NIRO payments.

An application for preliminary RHI accreditation was received before scheme closure in February 2016. The applicant could be eligible for an RHI payment of over £1.6m per annum for 20 years once the project was completed and fully accredited. However, preliminary accreditation does not guarantee the current tariff being available when the installation has been completed. Given the budgetary pressures with the RHI DfE cannot give any assurances around tariffs.

The applicant has sought reassurance from the Department about the availability of RHI tariffs going forward. DfE officials have confirmed that provided the project meets all Ofgem's eligibility criteria it would be entitled to the CHP tariff available at the time of commissioning. The applicant has also been made aware that due to the budgetary pressures, the Department cannot rule out the current CHP tariff of 3.5 pence per kWh changing, or a time limit being placed for completion of the works. A consultation on RHI cost controls is due to take place in the autumn. It is expected that this might provide the assurances that the applicant is seeking.

The project also hopes to accredit to NIRO before closure. This would require the installation being accredited and commissioned by 31 March 2017, or being eligible for a one year grid delay grace period, neither of which look certain. However, DfE officials understand that NIE Networks has confirmed that any necessary grid works to accommodate a connection for the McGuickan's project could be completed by 31 March 2017. It therefore looks unlikely that the project will qualify for the NIRO, but it will ultimately be a matter for

Ofgem to determine if the project can satisfy the criteria for a grid delay grace period under the NIRO. This could provide an additional 12 months, to 31 March 2018, for the project to accredit and be fully commissioned.

A copy of the invitation is attached at Annex A. A draft reply declining the invitation is attached at Annex B.

## 11. Ministerial comments

**[SIGNED]**

**PETER JOHNSTON**  
**Ext 28472**

## Copy Distribution List

### HOCS

Jeremy Gardner

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John McCourt

Karen Fullerton

EIS Ministerial Cases

TEO PFG



**ORIGINAL CORRESPONDENCE**  
**(SEE SEPARATE ATTACHMENT)**

**DRAFT REPLY FOR SIGNATURE OF PS/ MINISTERS TO LIAM MCGUCKIAN**

**Our Ref: INV/1381/2016**

**Mr Liam McGuckian**  
**Cloughmills**  
**Ballymena**  
[liam@mcguckianmilling.co.uk](mailto:liam@mcguckianmilling.co.uk)

**September 2016**

**Dear**

Thank you for your correspondence of 19 August 2016 in which you invited the First Minister and deputy First Minister to meet with you to discuss the Biomass Energy Plant at McGuckian's Farm. Ministers have read your correspondence and asked us to reply on their behalf.

Unfortunately on this occasion Ministers are unable to accept your invitation. Ministers are aware that there have been ongoing discussions with officials in the Department for the Economy.

Yours sincerely

**PS/FIRST MINISTER**

**PS/DEPUTY FIRST MINISTER**