

**RE: RHI - Nolan**

Timothy Johnston

**Sent:** 10 November 2016 22:57**To:** John Robinson; Clive McFarland; Simon Hamilton; Arlene Foster [arlene@arlenefoster.org.uk]**Categories:**Yellow Category

have changed it. still working on it

t

---

**From:** John Robinson**Sent:** 10 November 2016 22:57**To:** Clive McFarland; Timothy Johnston; Simon Hamilton; Arlene Foster**Subject:** RE: RHI - Nolan

I don't think Clive's is far away for the party.

I had drafted below earlier which is probably better coming from the Department. Also I've added the previous statement.

Key points:

- Systemic failures
- Took action
- plan to correct in longer term

J

There were systemic failures in the administration of the RHI scheme by officials. It is rightly a matter being investigated by the Audit Office, the Public Accounts Committee and in due course, if fraud is identified, it will be referred for criminal proceedings.

Whether it was the absence of tiered tariffs or controls on costs, at various stages of the scheme there were serious failings and opportunities were missed to remediate the situation by those directly responsible for administering the scheme.

A whistle-blower brought these concerns to the attention of the then DETI Minister Arlene Foster MLA. She took appropriate action and had the matter investigated. The scheme was closed and the Economy Minister is now considering steps to reduce the costs of the scheme. Given the potential liability to the public purse, all options are being considered.

Upon taking up office, the Economy Minister commissioned an independent audit of installations. This has further raised concerns about abuse of the scheme. The Department for the Economy is also holding an internal fact-finding investigation of officials' actions or lack of actions.

Given the ongoing investigations and potential for legal recourse it would be inappropriate to comment further on the detail of the various investigations or specific cases.

**[Previous statement | 4 July 2016](#)**

Commenting Simon Hamilton said,

"At the outset I thank the Audit Office for their work to date on what are extremely serious issues. The Audit Office's findings in respect of the Renewable Heat Incentive scheme (RHI) are deeply shocking and catalogue multiple failings in the design and administration of this scheme. The potential ongoing costs of this scheme to Northern Ireland taxpayers are incredible and the accusations of fraud will be rigorously investigated.

Whether it is the absence of tiered tariffs or controls on costs, at various stages of the scheme there were serious systemic failings and opportunities were missed to remediate the situation by those directly responsible for administering the scheme.

Since becoming Economy Minister in late May, I have held meetings with senior officials about the RHI scheme and how things reached the point of it being over-budget. On foot of these discussions, external consultants are already being appointed to conduct on-the-spot and thorough inspections of installations to ensure they meet the spirit and letter of the scheme. While the policy purpose of the scheme was well founded, aimed at increasing our use of renewable technology, there will be no toleration of fraud and where it is identified it will be firmly dealt with. In addition, we are already actively considering options as to how the costs of the scheme could be controlled in the future. All options will be considered to determine whether future liabilities to the public purse can be minimized.

I take the issues raised by the Audit Office extremely seriously and I have instructed departmental officials to work through the range of serious issues raised. Lessons must be learned for the future to ensure this type of situation never arises again".

John Robinson | M:

Personal information redacted by the RHI Inquiry

---

**From:** Clive McFarland

**Sent:** 10 November 2016 21:19

**To:** Timothy Johnston; John Robinson; Simon Hamilton; Arlene Foster

**Subject:** RHI - Nolan

Any thoughts on this as a draft response?

I'm not sure how we exactly respond to SF taking a shot at us in terms of the impact on the budget.

A DUP spokesman said, "The problems highlighted with the RHI scheme have been acknowledged as shocking and it is vital that accusations of fraud are rigorously investigated.

As DETI Minister Arlene Foster brought the concerns of whistleblowers to the necessary authorities.

There were serious systemic failings and opportunities missed to remediate the situation by those directly responsible for administering the scheme."

Sent from my iphone

Begin forwarded message:

**From:** Ross Carson <[ross.carson@bbc.co.uk](mailto:ross.carson@bbc.co.uk)>  
**Date:** 10 November 2016 at 16:15:16 GMT  
**To:** Clive McFarland <[clivemcfarland@dup.org.uk](mailto:clivemcfarland@dup.org.uk)>  
**Subject:** Nolan show

Hi Clive,

Can I bid for Arlene Foster for tomorrow's show? We're discussing the Renewable Heat Incentive scheme and as you know Mrs Foster was DETI Minister at the time.

If she's not available can you put someone else up?

If that's not possible please provide a statement answering the following --

1. A senior civil servant has said the Stormont renewable energy scheme is "the biggest financial scandal in living memory". What is Arlene Foster's reaction to this claim?
2. A whistleblower is said to have flagged concerns about abuse of the RHI scheme. And that Arlene Foster, as DETI Minister, was aware of this whistleblower. But that it took another two years before it was shut down. What is Arlene Foster's view on this missed opportunity to mitigate the financial damage caused by the RHI scheme abuse?
3. Sinn Fein has released a statement today which says in part "this now has repercussions for the resilience of the Northern block grant and wider public confidence." How worried is Arlene Foster that the mistakes made in the RHI scheme will adversely affect public spending and public confidence in Northern Ireland?

Many thanks,

Ross

Ross Carson  
Producer  
Nolan Show

BBC Radio Ulster

phone | 028 9033 8848 |

email | <mailto:ross.carson@bbc.co.uk>

mail | BBC Broadcasting House - Radio Current Affairs | Ormeau Avenue | Belfast | BT2 8HQ

Personal information redacted by the RHI Inquiry

<http://www.bbc.co.uk>

This e-mail (and any attachments) is confidential and may contain personal views which are not the views of the BBC unless specifically stated.

If you have received it in error, please delete it from your system.

Do not use, copy or disclose the information in any way nor act in reliance on it and notify the sender immediately.