



**Northern Ireland  
Assembly**

**COMMITTEE FOR THE ECONOMY**

**MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS**

**12 FEBRUARY 2020**

**INVEST NI, BELFAST**

**10:00am**

Present: Dr Caoímhe Archibald (Chairperson)  
Ms Sinéad McLaughlin (Deputy Chairperson)  
Mr Gordon Dunne MBE  
Mr Gary Middleton  
Mr John O'Dowd  
Mr Christopher Stalford  
Mr John Stewart

In Attendance: Mr Peter Hall (Assembly Clerk)  
Ms Sinead Kelly (Assistant Assembly Clerk)  
Ms Angela McParland (Assistant Assembly Clerk)  
Ms Claire Milliken (Assistant Assembly Clerk)  
Mr Michael Greer (Clerical Supervisor)  
Mr Thomas Manning (Clerical Officer)

Apologies: Mr Stewart Dickson  
Ms Claire Sugden

*The meeting began at 10:10am in open session*

**1. Apologies**

As noted above.

## **2. Draft Minutes**

*Agreed:* the Committee agreed the draft Minutes of the meeting on 5<sup>th</sup> February 2020.

## **3. Chairpersons Business**

There were no items of business.

## **4. Invest NI Briefing: EU Exit Plans**

*The officials joined the meeting at 10.13am*

Members received a briefing from:

**Mr Kevin Holland**, CEO, Invest NI

**Mr Donal Durkin**, Executive Director Strategy, Invest NI,

**Mr David Roberts**, Evaluation Manager, Invest NI

**Ms Giulia Ní Dhulchaointigh**, EU Exit Preparation and Transition Group, DfE

Key issues discussed included preparations for Northern Ireland protocol, key priorities of CEO to drive Northern Ireland businesses to succeed overseas, Invest NI presence globally in readiness for future free trade agreements negotiated by the UK Government, Invest NI four year business strategy, value for money of Invest NI support to businesses, business engagement, business support and bespoke solution support to businesses.

*John Stewart declared an interest in regards to a family business having formerly received assistance from Invest NI.*

*Gordon Dunne left the meeting at 11:15am*

*Gordon Dunne joined the meeting at 11.18am*

*Agreed:* the Committee to receive a copy of the report on customs capacity within Northern Ireland that will assist Invest NI's preparations for the Northern Ireland protocol.

*The officials left the meeting at 11.39am*

## **5. Tourism NI Briefing: EU Exit Plans**

*The Officials joined the meeting at 11.40am*

Members received a briefing from:

**Mr John McGrillen**, Chief Executive, Tourism NI

**Mr Victor Dukelow**, EU Exit Preparation and Transition Group, DfE

The key issues discussed included consequences to Tourism NI of significant investment by the Republic of Ireland in Tourism Ireland and Fáilte Ireland, Tourism NI spending bids, Tourism NI marketing and product development resources, consumer confidence, effect of Brexit uncertainty, consumer sentiment impact, conference travel, incentive travel, labour retention, market and sector diversification, importance of City Deals and hotel occupancy.

*Chairperson left the meeting at 12.30pm*

*Deputy Chairperson took the Chair at 12.30pm*

*The officials left the meeting at 12.59pm*

## **6. Matters Arising**

*Noted:* Members noted a response from the Department in relation to the January Monitoring Round outlining the bids approved and declined and further detail in relation to each of the bids submitted.

*Noted:* Members noted that the Budget Bill is to be scheduled for introduction to the Assembly, week commencing 24<sup>th</sup> February.

*Agreed:* Members agreed that an official attend the meeting on 19<sup>th</sup> February for questions from Members in regards to the written response from the Minister on budget baselines and process.

*Noted:* Members noted a response from the Department detailing a summary of consumer spending figures for Northern Ireland and a link to a research report, which the Department had commissioned on the Northern Ireland consumer's reliance on external markets and sourcing.

*Noted:* Members noted a response from the Department on renewable energy indicating that the potential new schemes and future targets that will be considered as part of a new Energy Strategy. Members noted that officials are due to brief the Committee on the Energy Strategy on 11<sup>th</sup> March 2020.

*Christopher Stalford left the meeting at 1.02pm*

## **7. Examiner of Statutory Rules – First and Second Report of Session 2019/20**

*Noted:* Members noted the Examiner of Statutory Rules First and Second reports for this session. Members noted that the Examiner has not raised any issues in relation to Statutory Rules laid by the Department.

## **8. Information requested from the Department**

*Noted:* Members noted the current list of information requested by the Committee from the Department.

## **9. Forward Work Programme**

Members considered the revised draft Forward Work Programme.

*Agreed:* the Committee agreed to a briefing from the Renewable Heat Association on 11<sup>th</sup> March.

## **10. Correspondence**

*Noted:* Members noted correspondence from the Chair of the Northern Ireland Affairs Committee highlighting their report “Changes to the Northern Ireland Renewable Heat Incentive”, including a response to the report from the Department.

*Noted:* Members noted correspondence from the Finance Committee regarding the Budget Bill and resource requirements for the forthcoming year.

*Agreed:* Members agreed to forward the budget information to the Finance Committee, once received from the Department.

*Noted:* Members noted a copy of the latest Annual Report for Stranmillis College.

*Noted:* Members noted an invitation from Mid-Ulster Council to host the Committee at a Council location in Mid-Ulster.

*Agreed:* Members agreed to write to the Council thanking them for the invitation.

*Noted:* Members noted correspondence from the NI Human Rights Commission requesting a meeting with the Chair and Deputy Chair.

*Agreed:* Members agreed for the Chair and Deputy Chair to meet with the NI Human Rights Commission and provide an update to the Committee.

*Noted:* Members noted a request from the Construction Employers Federation to have a meeting with the Chair to discuss concerns within the industry.

*Agreed:* Members agreed to include a briefing from the Federation into the Forward Work Programme at the earliest opportunity and inform the Federation of this approach.

*Noted:* Members noted correspondence from the Ulster University Students Union offering their assistance for future briefings. Members noted that contact has been made with the Union and an informal meeting is likely to be organised to coincide with the Committee's visit to Magee College towards the end of March.

*Noted:* Members noted a report from Pivotal 'Moving forward – putting Northern Ireland on track for the future' and a request to meet with the Committee.

*Agreed:* Members agreed that the Chair and Deputy Chair meet with Pivotal and provide an update to the Committee.

*Noted:* Members noted correspondence from the Managing Director of Heatboss outlining concerns in relation to the new Energy Strategy and whether Invest NI's interest free loan scheme is returning.

*Agreed:* Members agreed on receipt of permission from the Managing Director, to forward the correspondence to the Department to highlight the issues raised.

*Noted:* Members noted correspondence from the First Minister and Deputy First Minister regarding the Executive's legislative programme, including a written statement on the Bills to be brought forward before the summer recess.

*Noted:* Members noted the First Minister and Deputy First Minister will also bring forward a motion for an early debate on the Legislative programme.

*Noted:* Members noted a public consultation by the Department for International Trade on the UK Global Tariff.

*Agreed:* Members agreed to write to the Department to ask what input it will have into the consultation.

*Noted:* Members noted correspondence from the EU Affairs Manager highlighting a visit to Parliament Buildings on the 25<sup>th</sup> February by the House of Lords EU Committee to have discussions and take evidence on the revised protocol on Ireland/Northern Ireland.

*Noted:* Members noted that the House of Lords EU Committee has invited Members to a business roundtable with business representatives to discuss the practicalities of the protocol and implications north/south and east/west etc. and that Chairs, and possibly other Members, are also invited to an informal lunch. Members noted that a formal request from the Clerk to the EU Affairs Committee is expected this week but Members can indicate to the Clerk at this stage if they wish to attend.

*Noted:* Members noted correspondence from the Clerk to the EU Internal Market Sub-Committee seeking a written contribution from the Assembly to a short Inquiry into UK-EU negotiations on state aid and the level playing field. Members noted that the Sub-Committee is in touch with the Department.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed that the Clerk draft a response around the Subcommittee's discussions thus far, for the Committee to consider and approve.

*Noted:* Members noted an invitation to a Manufacturing Business Month breakfast on Thursday 5<sup>th</sup> March at The Factory, Mac Belfast.

*Noted:* Members noted presentations given at the Brexit briefings by the Institute for Government the previous week.

## **11. Any Other Business**

*Agreed:* Members agreed to receive a briefing from the Examiner of Statutory Rules at the meeting on 19<sup>th</sup> February.

## **12. Date, Time and Place of Next Meeting**

The next meeting of the Committee will take place on Wednesday 19<sup>th</sup> February 2020 in Room 29, Parliament Buildings at 10am.

*The Deputy Chairperson adjourned the meeting at 1:16pm*

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**Dr Caoímhe Archibald**  
**Deputy Chairperson**  
**Committee for the Economy**

**19<sup>th</sup> February 2020**