



**Northern Ireland  
Assembly**

**COMMITTEE FOR THE ECONOMY**

**MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS**

**30 SEPTEMBER 2020**

**ROOM 30, PARLIAMENT BUILDINGS**

**10:00am**

- Present:
- Dr Caoímhe Archibald (Chairperson)
  - Ms Sinéad McLaughlin (Deputy Chairperson)
  - Mr Stewart Dickson
  - Mr Gordon Dunne MBE
  - Mr Gary Middleton
  - Mr John O'Dowd
  - Mr John Stewart
- In Attendance:
- Mr Peter Hall (Assembly Clerk)
  - Ms Sinead Kelly (Assistant Assembly Clerk)
  - Mr David McClure (Assistant Assembly Clerk)
  - Mr Michael Greer (Clerical Supervisor)
  - Mr Thomas Manning (Clerical Officer)
- Apologies:
- Mr Christopher Stalford
  - Ms Claire Sugden

*The meeting began at 10:02am in open session.*

**1. Apologies**

As noted above.

## 2. Minutes

*Agreed:* the Committee agreed the Minutes from 23<sup>rd</sup> September 2020.

## 3. Chairperson's Business

The Chairperson informed the Committee of a plan to undertake a series of micro inquiries seeking the views of the stakeholders on the best way to undertake the recovery and rebuilding of the local economy.

*Agreed:* the Committee agreed for the Clerk to bring back a proposal.

The Chairperson advised Members that issues have arisen in securing a venue in Upper Bann due to Coronavirus restrictions but that Southern Regional College has invited the Committee to hold its meeting on 21<sup>st</sup> October at its Portadown campus.

*Agreed:* Members agreed to meet at the Southern Regional College's Portadown campus.

## 4. Oral Briefing from Development Trusts Northern Ireland: COVID-19 Response Plan

*The Witnesses joined the meeting at 10.10am*

Members received a briefing from:

**Charlie Fisher,** Programme Manager, Development Trusts  
Northern Ireland

**Margaret Craig,** Project Coordinator, Development Trusts  
Northern Ireland

Key issues discussed included: their report "From Coronavirus to Community Wealth", the role they play in promoting asset led development and community enterprise in third sector, the need for creative and innovative ways of making public assets work for local people which requires creativity and joint working across government departments.

*The Witnesses left the meeting at 11.24am*

*Agreed:* to write to the Department of Finance regarding disposal of public assets and seeking clarification if the Department holds a list of government owned sites and buildings.

*Agreed:* to seek an update on Invest NI's intention to dispose of Antrim Technology Park.

*Agreed:* to get copies of the four area case studies that were mentioned during the briefing.

## **5. Oral Briefing from The Department: EU Exit Group: Brexit, UK Internal Market & Trade Bill**

*The officials joined the meeting at 11.29am*

Members received a briefing from:

**Mr Paul Grocott;** EU Exit Preparation and Transition Group,  
Department for the Economy;

**Ms Giulia Ní Dhulchaointigh;** EU Exit Preparation and Transition Group,  
Department for the Economy;

**Mr Victor Dukelow;** EU Exit Preparation and Transition Group,  
Department for the Economy;

**Mr Stephen Kelly,** EU Exit Preparation and Transition Group,  
Department for the Economy;

Key issues discussed included: the key provisions of the UK Internal Market Bill, the policy implications of the bill and the development of UK trade deals.

*John Stewart left the meeting at 12:24pm*

*The officials left the meeting at 12.41pm*

## **6. Matters Arising**

*Noted:* Members noted a letter from the DALO regarding the Department's Annual Report and Accounts 2019-2020 which this Committee considered last week.

*Noted:* Members noted a response from the Department regarding the Committee's request for a briefing on the links between bids, the Rebuilding a stronger Economy documents and other strategies within the Department.

*Noted:* Members noted correspondence from the Audit Office regarding the results of the Comptroller and Auditor General audit of the 2019-20 accounts of the Department and Invest NI.

*Noted:* Members noted correspondence from a managing director regarding an update on the Retail, Hospitality, Tourism and Leisure Grant Scheme.

*Agreed:* to forward the correspondence to the Department and urge them to engage with the group as per the suggestion in the correspondence.

*Noted:* Members noted correspondence from the FE Principals Group regarding the arrangements for awarding of qualifications and an overview of the curriculum development leads taken by each Regional College.

## **7. Departmental Written Briefing - Tourism Recovery Steering Group Update**

Members discussed the Departmental Written Briefing which provided an overview of the tourism industry performance during July and August and the challenges facing them in the months ahead.

*Agreed:* the Committee agreed to forward the draft action plan to NITA for comment.

## **8. Correspondence**

*Noted:* Members noted a response from the Minister of State regarding the ongoing work of the Business Engagement Forum.

*Noted:* Members noted correspondence from the Committee for Finance regarding a briefing it received from RaISe in respect of the approach taken by the Scottish Government in securing sufficient supplies of PPE.

*Agreed:* to write to the Committee for Finance highlighting the Committee's previous work on this issue.

*Noted:* Members noted correspondence from the Law Society of NI requesting to brief the Committee on what services they offer in terms of mediation in commercial, business and other areas of life in Northern Ireland.

*Agreed:* to schedule an informal briefing from the Law Society of NI.

*Noted:* Members noted correspondence from an individual regarding the closure of HMS Caroline.

*Agreed:* to forward to the Department for information and inform the correspondent of the action.

*Noted:* Members noted the Twenty-second Report of the Examiner of Statutory Rules 2019-2020.

*Noted:* Members noted diagrams from Building Services regarding the completed Covid-19 restrictions room layouts for each of the Committee Rooms.

*Agreed:* the Committee agreed to work to six Members in the room during a meeting.

*Noted:* Members noted correspondence from the NUS-USI president regarding their views to the increased student numbers after A-Level results and tuition fees.

*Agreed:* to bring back this correspondence to the Committee when other responses have been received.

*Noted:* Members noted the latest ISNI Delivery Tracking System report.

*Noted:* Members noted correspondence from an individual requesting to brief the Committee on issues relating to conflicts of interest and information being given by the Department with regard to fracking research.

*Agreed:* to arrange an informal meeting with the group.

*Noted:* Members noted correspondence from Dr Steve Aiken, leader of the UUP regarding the Internal Market Bill.

*The Committee agreed to move to agenda item 11*

## **11. Guidance on the Delivery of the SI Element of the EU Exit Transition Period**

*Noted:* Members noted the guidance issued regarding the Delivery of the SI Element of the EU Exit Transition Period.

## **12. SI – The Electricity and Gas Etc. (Amendment) (EU Exit) Regulations 2020.**

*Noted:* Members noted the SI – The Electricity and Gas Etc. (Amendment) (EU Exit) Regulations 2020.

*The Committee agreed to return to agenda item 9.*

## **9. Any Other Business**

Members discussed the current situation affecting certain sectors not being eligible for support through the Job Retention scheme and the need to widen it out for those business unable to bring staff back from furlough.

*Agreed:* the Committee agreed to write to the UK Chancellor highlighting Members' views.

Members discussed the issue of support for coach and taxi operators, as Members continue to receive correspondence from individuals working in the industry who face losing their livelihoods unless there is targeted support for the sector

*Agreed:* the Committee agreed to write to the Infrastructure Minister urging her to take up the Finance Minister's offer and to provide details to the Committee regarding the timescale and criteria of any support for this beleaguered sector.

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

The next meeting of the Committee will take place on Wednesday 7<sup>th</sup> October 2020 in Room 30, Parliament Buildings at 10am.

*The Chairperson adjourned the meeting at 13.22pm*

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**Dr Caoímhe Archibald**  
**Chairperson**  
**Committee for the Economy**  
**7<sup>th</sup> October 2020**