



**Northern Ireland
Assembly**

COMMITTEE FOR THE ECONOMY

MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS

4 NOVEMBER 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 Christopher Stalford
 - Ms Claire Sugden
- In Attendance:
- Mr Peter Hall (Assembly Clerk)
 - Ms Sinead Kelly (Assistant Assembly Clerk)
 - Ms Maeve Holly (Assistant Assembly Clerk)
 - Mr David McClure (Assistant Assembly Clerk)
 - Mr Michael Greer (Clerical Supervisor)
 - Mr Thomas Manning (Clerical Officer)
- Apologies:
- Mr John Stewart

The meeting began at 10:06am in open session.

1. Apologies

As noted above.

2. Minutes

Agreed: the Committee agreed the Minutes from 21st October 2020.

Agreed: the Committee agreed the Record of Decision from 21st October 2020.

3. Chairperson's Business

The Chairperson raised the issues some businesses are having with the complexity of the application process for the Covid Restrictions Business Support Scheme.

Agreed: Members agreed to write to the Minister raising the issues discussed.

Agreed: Members agreed to write to UK Finance regarding the current situation around Business Bank accounts.

Agreed: Members agreed to write to the Finance Minister seeking further information on how the extended Furlough Scheme will apply in Northern Ireland including whether it can be back-dated.

4. Oral Briefing from the Department: NIAO Report on NIRO

The Officials joined the meeting at 10.18am

Members received a briefing from:

Mr Richard Rodgers, Head of Energy Group, Department for the Economy;

Mr Thomas Byrne, Director of Sustainable Energy Division, Department for the Economy;

Mr Trevor McBriar, SEM Renewables Branch, Department for the Economy

Key issues discussed included: the findings of the NIAO Report on the NIRO, the success of the NIRO in achieving renewables targets, the need to learn the mistakes of the past in the development and implementation of any new energy schemes and the development of the Energy Strategy.

Agreed: Members agreed to write to the PAC Committee to inform them that the Economy Committee will step back due to the inquiry into NIRO and to provide them with any relevant information considered by the Committee.

The Officials left the meeting at 11.45pm

5. Matters Arising

Noted: Members noted a response from the Minister regarding support for those who have to self-isolate due to Covid-19.

Noted: Members noted a press release from the Minister in regards to the announcement that applications are open for the first stage of the Covid Restrictions Business Support Scheme.

Noted: Members noted a Departmental response regarding the Economic Advisory Group Terms of Reference.

Agreed: Members agreed to write to the Minister raising issues around the Terms of Reference of the Economic Advisory Group.

Noted: Members noted a Departmental response regarding the impact of Covid-19 has had on teaching.

Noted: Members noted a Departmental response regarding the British Heart Foundation research investment.

Noted: Members noted a Departmental response regarding the funding for City of Derry airport.

Agreed: Members agreed to write to the Infrastructure Minister highlighting the importance of connectivity in boosting economy recovery.

Noted: Members noted an updated paper from the Department on revised COVID bids.

Noted: Members noted a response from the Minister of State regarding the definition of qualifying Northern Ireland Goods (EU Exit) Regulation 2020.

Noted: Members noted correspondence from the Public Accounts Committee regarding the NIAO report on renewables.

Noted: Members noted correspondence from the Department for Communities regarding support for those who have to self-isolate.

Noted: Members noted correspondence from an individual regarding the comparative picture for COVID-19 positive cases in Northern Ireland Universities and those in GB.

Agreed: Members agreed to write to the Higher & Further Education sector seeking up to date figures.

Noted: Members noted correspondence from Excluded NI on the new support schemes.

Noted: Members noted the guidance and FAQs for the NI Micro-Business Hardship Fund.

6. SL1 - Corporate Insolvency and Governance Act (Amendment of Relevant Period for Meetings of Registered Societies and Credit Unions No.2) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2020

Members considered SL1 - Corporate Insolvency and Governance Act (Amendment of Relevant Period for Meetings of Registered Societies and Credit Unions No.2) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2020.

Agreed: Members indicated that they are content with the policy implications of the proposed legislation.

7. Departmental Written Briefing - EU Exit Legislation

Members considered the Departmental Written Briefing on EU Exit Legislation.

8. Departmental Written Briefing - CSR Update

This item was deferred until 18th November at the request of the Department.

9. House of Commons International Trade Committee's inquiry into the UK-Japan trade agreement

Members considered a paper from the House of Commons International Trade Committee's inquiry into the UK-Japan trade agreement.

Agreed: Members agreed to respond incorporating issues raised by EU Exit officials.

10. HSENI Annual Report and Accounts - 2019-2020

Noted: Members noted The HSENI Annual Report and Accounts 2019-2020.

Agreed: Members agreed to have a briefing from the HSENI.

11. Correspondence

Noted: Members noted correspondence from the Minister regarding the HSENI board competition consultation letter.

Noted: Members noted correspondence from the Minister regarding the REACH SI.

Noted: Members noted correspondence from the Minister regarding the Chemicals (Health & Safety) and Genetically Modified Organisms (Amendment of Retained EU Law) (EU Exit) Regulations 2020.

Noted: Members noted correspondence from the Minister regarding consent by NI Ministers to the UK Statutory Instruments.

Noted: Members noted a Departmental response regarding the Priority Dispatch Consultation.

Noted: Members noted correspondence from the Committee for Infrastructure regarding the NIE new home Wayleave.

Agreed: Members agreed to forward the correspondence onto the Department for a response.

Noted: Members noted correspondence from Jemma Dolan MLA advising the Committee of her Private Members Bill on Zero Hour Contracts.

Agreed: Members agreed to write to Jemma Dolan acknowledging her letter.

Noted: Members noted a report from RenewablesNI entitled “Power of Renewables: A Route to 80 by 30”.

Noted: Members noted a survey and report by NI Tourism Alliance “Protecting Lives, Protecting Livelihoods: Finding a Balance to Protect our Community and our Economy”.

Noted: Members noted correspondence from the Association of British Insurers in regards to fleet vehicle insurance.

Noted: Members noted correspondence from the Belcoo Frack Free.

Noted: Members noted correspondence from the Committee on Administration of Justice regarding the Citizen’s Rights (Frontier Workers) (EU Exit) Regulations 2020.

Agreed: Members agreed to write to the CAJ indicating the Committee has a close interest in the issues raised.

Noted: Members noted correspondence from an individual regarding Covid-19 cases in universities.

Noted: Members noted the latest ISNI Investing Activity Report.

12. Any Other Business

There were no items of business.

13. Date, Time and Place of Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Committee will take place on Wednesday 11th November 2020 in Room 30, Parliament Buildings at 10am.

The meeting moved in closed session at 12.34pm

14. Energy Strategy Micro Inquiry [Closed Session]

Members considered the agenda for the NI Economy Micro Inquiry “Zoom” conference on the 5th November

Members considered the motion for the Energy Strategy Special Report.

Agreed: Members agreed to the following motion on the Energy Strategy Special Report:

“That this Assembly welcomes the Special Report of the Committee for the Economy on considerations for the forthcoming Energy Strategy; and supports the development of an ambitious, target-driven Energy Strategy that will decarbonise the energy sector by 2050 while minimising the cost to the consumer; and recognises the Strategy’s potential to boost our economic, health and social well-being into the future”.

Agreed: Members agreed to a report being published following the debate on the motion.

The Chairperson adjourned the meeting at 12.37pm

Dr Caoímhe Archibald
Chairperson
Committee for the Economy
11th November 2020