



**Northern Ireland  
Assembly**

**COMMITTEE FOR THE ECONOMY**

**MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS**

**27 JANUARY 2021**

**ROOM 29, 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  
Ms Claire Sugden

In Attendance: Mr Peter Hall (Assembly Clerk)  
Ms Sinead Kelly (Assistant Assembly Clerk)  
Ms Maeve Holly (Assistant Assembly Clerk)  
Mr Michael Greer (Clerical Supervisor)  
Mr Thomas Manning (Clerical Officer)

Apologies: Mr Christopher Stalford

*The meeting began at 10:07am in closed session.*

**1. Departmental Briefing – Project Stratum**

*The Officials joined the meeting at 10.08am*

Members received a briefing from:

<b>Nigel Robbins,</b>	Director, Project Stratum, Department for the Economy
<b>Geraldine Fee,</b>	Head of Tourism, Telecoms, Minerals & Petroleum Branch
<b>Trevor Forsythe,</b>	Grade 7 Telecoms, Department for the Economy
<b>Eamonn Blaney,</b>	Grade 7 Telecoms, Department for the Economy

*The Officials left the meeting at 11.33am*

*The Committee agreed to move to open session at 11:39am.*

## **2. Apologies**

As noted above.

## **3. Minutes**

*Agreed:* the Committee agreed the Minutes from 20<sup>th</sup> January 2021.

## **4. Chairperson's Business**

The Chairperson highlighted to Members that the advice was issued to all Members on Monday in relation to attending meetings remotely and providing options for when there are difficulties with internet connections.

The Chairperson updated Members on an informal meeting on 'Community Energy' which took place on Thursday 21<sup>st</sup> January with Drumlin Wind Energy Cooperative Ltd and Northern Ireland Community Energy (NICE).

*Agreed:* the Committee agreed to write to the Minister urging that officials engage with stakeholders on this matter.

The Chairperson reminded Members she will be representing the Committee on an expert panel at the launch of OCN's Skills research report this afternoon.

## **5. Departmental Briefing - EU Exit Update**

*The briefing was deferred due to time constraints.*

## **6. Matters Arising**

*Noted:* Members noted a letter from the Minister regarding the awarding of vocational qualifications and Essential Skills for the remainder of this academic year and an associated press release.

*Noted:* Members noted a letter from the Minister on ring-fencing of Covid-19 support funds.

*Noted:* Members noted a written statement from the Finance Minister on January Monitoring.

*Noted:* Members noted a response from the Minister on climate action.

*Agreed:* the Committee agreed to forward this response to the AERA Committee.

*Noted:* Members noted a Clerk's memo from the AERA Committee regarding the scheduling of a meeting with TSS and HMRC on EU Exit.

*Noted:* Members noted a Clerk's Memo from the Committee for Finance advising that all statutory committees are requested to review the impact of the draft Budget 2021-22 in respect of their Departments.

*Noted:* Members noted a letter from Invest NI regarding Velocity Worldwide.

*Noted:* Members noted correspondence from the president of Ulster University Students' Union regarding the challenges facing students.

*Noted:* Members noted a summary from the CBI on its Covid19 Emergency Working Group.

*Noted:* Members noted a report from KPMG on the small-scale wind sector.

*Noted:* Members noted Correspondence from the President of Queen's University Student Union regarding student fees, housing and the mental health impacts of Covid-19.

*Noted:* Members noted a response from the Minister regarding student mental health, welfare and wellbeing.

*Noted:* Members noted the Department's weekly SITREP – Key Issues summary table for the Committee.

*Noted:* Members noted a Departmental response regarding the Student Loans Application Process.

*Noted:* Members noted a Departmental response regarding the status of self-employed European workers wishing to work in England after the UK exit from the EU.

*Agreed:* the Committee agreed to forward this correspondence to the individual concerned and to highlight to the Department that this will be an increasingly problematic issue.

*Noted:* Members noted a response from the Minister for Finance regarding Financial Assistance to Businesses who are not Eligible for the LRSS, particularly sports and other membership clubs.

*Members agreed to deal with the remaining agenda items via correspondence, due to time constraints.*

**7. Departmental Written Briefing - Review of Level 4 and 5 Provision and HE in FE (Review of existing policy)**

*Members agreed to defer Agenda Item 7 until next week, due to time constraints.*

**8. Correspondence**

*Members agreed to deal with Agenda Item 8 via correspondence, due to time constraints.*

**9. Any Other Business**

Members discussed an issue regarding exclusion from the LTHBSS of large leisure businesses with a rateable value over £51k.

*Agreed:* the Committee agreed to write to the Department and the Department for Communities to ask what support is being considered for large scale leisure businesses who are ineligible for the existing scheme.

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

The next meeting of the Committee will take place on Wednesday 3rd February 2021 in Room 30, Parliament Buildings at 10am.

*The Chairperson adjourned the meeting at 12.02pm*

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**Dr Caoímhe Archibald**  
**Chairperson**  
**Committee for the Economy**  
**3<sup>rd</sup> February 2021**