



Northern Ireland  
Assembly

# Committee for the Economy

## Minutes of Proceedings

24<sup>th</sup> February 2021

**Meeting Location:** Room 30, Parliament Buildings

**Present:**

Dr Caoímhe Archibald (MLA (Chairperson)

Ms Sinéad McLaughlin MLA (Deputy Chairperson)

**Present by Video or Teleconference:**

Mr Stewart Dickson MLA

Mr Gordon Dunne MBE MLA

Mr Paul Givan MLA

Mr John O'Dowd MLA

Mr John Stewart MLA

Mr Christopher Stalford MLA

Ms Claire Sugden MLA

**Apologies:**

**In Attendance:** Mr Peter Hall (Assembly Clerk)



## Northern Ireland Assembly

Mr Thomas Manning (Clerical Officer)

### **In Attendance by Video or Teleconference:**

Ms Sinead Kelly (Assistant Assembly Clerk)

Ms Maeve Holly (Assistant Assembly Clerk)

Mr Michael Greer (Clerical Supervisor)

The meeting commenced at 10.06am in open session

### **1. Apologies**

As noted above.

### **2. Draft Minutes**

*Agreed:* the Committee agreed the Minutes from 17<sup>th</sup> February 2021

*Agreed:* the Committee agreed the Record of Decision from 17<sup>th</sup> February 2021

### **3. Chairpersons Business**

The Chairperson informed Members of correspondence from the Speaker regarding a Public Petition entitled 'Covid Support Payment for Students' which was laid in the Assembly on 8<sup>th</sup> February by Sinead McLaughlin MLA.



## Northern Ireland Assembly

The Chairperson informed Members of correspondence from the PAC Clerk regarding Inquiries that this Committee may be interested in.

*Agreed:* to respond to the PAC Clerk indicating that this Committee will consider the Investment in Broadband inquiry.

The Chairperson updated Members regarding the Committee's informal meeting with QUB's Staff and Student Strategy Working Group.

*Agreed:* to pursue the actions set out in the Clerks memo and arrange an informal meeting looking around the "Preston Model"

The Chairperson informed Members of correspondence the committee has been dealing with regarding the high price of LPG here, compared to neighbouring jurisdictions.

*Agreed:* to write to the Regulator to explore the possibility of bringing the regulation of the supply and pricing of LPG within his remit.

#### 4. Department for the Economy & Department of Education Briefing - 14-19 Strategy

*The Officials joined the meeting at 10.12am*

Members received a briefing from:

<b>Heather Cousins,</b>	Head of Skills and Education group, Department for the Economy
<b>Jamie Warnock,</b>	Assistant Director, Skills and Education Group, Department for the Economy
<b>Karen McCullough,</b>	Director, Curriculum Qualifications and Standards Directorate, Department of Education



Northern Ireland  
Assembly

**Claire McClelland,**

Project Manager, Transition of Young  
People into Careers (14-19) Project,  
Department of Education

**Joan Cassells,**

Grade 7, Qualifications Team, Department  
of Education

Key issues discussed included: the development of the joint 14-19 Strategy and the outcomes that it will hopefully deliver.

*The Officials left the meeting at 11.33am*

*Agreed:* the Committee agreed to write to the Education Committee sharing the Hansard and briefing papers and encouraging them to schedule a similar briefing.

*Agreed:* the Committee agreed to write to the Department of Finance DALO seeking an update on the NICS Apprenticeship Scheme.

*Agreed:* the Committee agreed to write to the Department of Communities DALO regarding the closure of the JobStart scheme.

*Agreed:* the Committee agreed to write to the Department seeking clarification on a number of issues that were raised.

**5. FSB, Logistics UK, NI Retail Consortium & Retail NI Briefing - EU Exit and NI Protocol**

*The Witnesses joint the meeting at 11.07am*

Members received a briefing from:

**Roger Pollen,**

Head of External Affairs, Federation of  
Small Businesses



Northern Ireland  
Assembly

**Seamus Leheny,**

Policy Manager for Northern Ireland,  
LogisticsUK

**Aodhán Connolly,**

Director, Northern Ireland Retail Consortium

**Glyn Roberts,**

Chief Executive, Retail NI

Key issues discussed included: an update on trading arrangements following EU Exit, current challenges being faced by businesses under the operation of the NI Protocol and the need to focus on long term solutions and ensure unfettered trade between GB & NI.

*The Witnesses left the meeting at 12.42pm*

*Agreed:* the Committee agreed to ask the Department what advice structures are available to businesses for support and advice on new trading requirements and procedures

## **6. Matters Arising**

*Noted:* Members noted a response from the Minister regarding support for students.

*Agreed:* to ask the Minister for further information regarding a number of issues raised.

*Noted:* Members noted a departmental response regarding Community Energy.

*Noted:* Members noted a departmental response including a table outlining the baseline and additional funding provided to InterTradeIreland for the current financial year and the previous five financial years.

*Noted:* Members noted correspondence from the Department regarding an update on the work of the EAG.

*Agreed:* to seek much greater detail of the Group's work from the Department.



## Northern Ireland Assembly

*Noted:* Members noted a response from the Department regarding an Airport Recovery Plan.

*Noted:* Members noted a response from the Department regarding a letter that the Committee forwarded about RHANI.

*Agreed:* to receive an informal briefing on this matter.

*Noted:* Members noted a response from the Department regarding support for small tourism accommodation.

*Agreed:* to seek the Department's confirmation that small tourism accommodation will be included in any hospitality/accommodation voucher scheme.

*Noted:* Members noted a response from the Department regarding fraudulent claims for Covid-19 Support Schemes.

*Noted:* Members noted a letter from Michael Gove MP regarding the implementation of the Protocol.

*Agreed:* to reply to Michael Gove MP thanking for his correspondence and raise issues not covered in his response to original letter

*Noted:* Members noted a letter from Ulster University regarding admissions criteria for the 2021-22 Academic Year.

*Noted:* Members noted a letter from the University and Colleges Union to the Minister regarding lecturer pay at Further Education Colleges.

The letter formally registers a trade dispute and has been copied to the Committee for information.

*Noted:* Members noted a response from the Departmental regarding the Student Hardship Fund.

*Noted:* Members noted a response from UU in relation to the relocation of Health Science courses.



Northern Ireland  
Assembly

## **7. Skills Strategy and Economic Output Micro Inquiry Special Report**

Members considered the updated Skills Strategy and Economic Output Micro Inquiry Special Report.

*Agreed: the Committee considered the report and agreed that it be printed.*

## **8. SR 2020/331 The Corporate Insolvency and Governance Act 2020 (Coronavirus) (Amendment of Relevant Period for Meetings of Registered Societies and Credit Unions No. 2) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2020**

Members noted the approved SR 2020/331 The Corporate Insolvency and Governance Act 2020 (Coronavirus) (Amendment of Relevant Period for Meetings of Registered Societies and Credit Unions No. 2) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2020.

## **9. Departmental Written Briefing - Update on Apprenticeship Recovery**

Members considered the Departmental Written Briefing – Update on Apprenticeship Recovery.

*Noted:* Members noted the written briefing.

## **10. Departmental Written Briefing - ESF Succession Project**

Members considered the Departmental Written Briefing – ESF Succession Project.

*Noted:* Members noted the written briefing.



## Northern Ireland Assembly

### **11. Programme for Government - Draft Outcomes Framework**

Members considered the Programme for Government – Draft Outcomes Framework.

*Agreed:* to receive a briefing from Officials at the appropriate point.

### **12. Consultation on the Future of the Northern Ireland Non-Domestic Renewable Heat Incentive Scheme**

Members considered the Consultation on the Future of the Northern Ireland Non-Domestic Renewable Heat Incentive Scheme.

*Noted:* Members noted the Consultation on the Future of the Northern Ireland Non-Domestic Renewable Heat Incentive Scheme.

### **13. EU Exit Structures**

Members noted a number of papers relating to the Intergovernmental relations and EU Exit.

*Noted:* Members noted the papers.

### **14. Correspondence**

*Noted:* Members noted a memo from the Clerk to the Committee for Justice, to the Economy Committee Clerk regarding the Protection from Stalking Bill which is currently at Committee stage.

*Noted:* Members noted correspondence from the Clerk to the Committee for AERA, to the Clerk to the Committee for Economy regarding correspondence they received from an individual who is a participant in the RHI scheme.





## Northern Ireland Assembly

*Noted:* Members noted correspondence from the Clerk to the Committee for the Executive Office to the Clerk for the Economy Committee regarding a student who has broadband connection difficulties at home which have had a serious impact on her ability and other members of her family to study at home.

*Agreed:* to respond, indicating that the Committee has already dealt with this correspondence.

*Noted:* Members noted correspondence from the Department regarding an individual who is an exams invigilator and the issues the individual has not been able to earn and has also not been able to access any of the financial schemes.

*Agreed:* to highlight this sector to the Department.

*Noted:* Members noted correspondence from RICS to the Communities Minister highlighting the benefits of retrofitting homes with sustainable energy solutions whilst also stimulating the economy through the development of people with new skills.

*Noted:* Members noted correspondence from a small business involved in the wedding sector and their offer to brief the committee along with others involved in the wedding sector about the issues they have faced during the pandemic particularly in relation to accessing financial assistance.

*Agreed:* to arrange an informal briefing on RHI.

*Noted:* Members noted correspondence from a property technology business that would like to employ staff here through the newly proposed Job Start Scheme.

*Agreed:* to forward the correspondence to the Minister for Communities and the Minister for the Economy asking for an update on the scheme.

*Noted:* Members noted the Twenty-fifth Report of the Examiner of Statutory Rules 2020 – 2021.

*Noted:* Members noted the Twenty-sixth Report of the Examiner of Statutory Rules 2020 – 2021.

*Noted:* Members noted correspondence from the NUS-USI highlighting the news that the Scottish Government has created a taskforce to consider student hardship.

*Agreed:* to write to the relevant Scottish Government Minister to seek details on the taskforce and its work.



## Northern Ireland Assembly

*Noted:* Members noted a news release from the ABI highlighting that insurers expect to pay up to £2.5billion in UK insurance claims.

*Agreed:* to ask the Department if it is aware of the issue or any action being taken in this regard.

*Noted:* Members noted the Annual Accounts and Reports 2020 of SERC and NWRC.

### **15. Any Other Business**

There were no items of business.

### **16. Date, Time and Place of the next meeting**

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

The meeting was adjourned at 1.21pm

**Dr Caoimhe Archibald MLA**  
**Chairperson, Committee for the Economy**  
**3<sup>rd</sup> March 2021.**