



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Committee for the Economy

Minutes of Proceedings

14th April 2021

Meeting Location: Room 30, Parliament Buildings

Present:

Dr Caoímhe Archibald (MLA (Chairperson))

Present by Video or Teleconference:

Ms Sinéad McLaughlin MLA (Deputy Chairperson)

Mr Stewart Dickson MLA

Mr Gary Middleton MLA

Mr John O'Dowd MLA

Mr John Stewart MLA

Apologies:

Mr Christopher Stalford MLA

Ms Claire Sugden MLA

Mr Mervyn Storey MLA

In Attendance:

Mr Peter Hall (Assembly Clerk)

Mr Thomas Manning (Clerical Officer)



Northern Ireland
Assembly

In Attendance by Video or Teleconference:

Ms Sinead Kelly (Assistant Assembly Clerk)

Ms Jean Barkley (Assistant Assembly Clerk)

Mr Michael Greer (Clerical Supervisor)

The meeting commenced at 10.10am in closed session

1. Departmental Briefing - Update on Project Stratum

The Officials joined the meeting at 10.11am

Members received a briefing from:

Geraldine Fee, Director Tourism & Telecoms, Department
for the Economy

Nigel Robbins, Project Director, Department for the
Economy

Trevor Forsythe, Project Manager, Department for the
Economy

Key issues discussed included: the current stage of the Project Stratum rollout.

The Officials left the meeting at 10.46am

The Committee agreed to move into open session at 10.48am



Northern Ireland
Assembly

**2. Briefing from the Department for the Economy & Fibrus Broadband
Northern Ireland - Update on Project Stratum**

The witnesses joined the meeting at 10.48am

Members received a briefing from:

Geraldine Fee,	Director Tourism & Telecoms, Department for the Economy
Nigel Robbins,	Project Director, Department for the Economy
Trevor Forsythe,	Project Manager, Department for the Economy
Conal Henry,	Chairman, Fibrus
Dominic Kearns,	Chief Executive, Fibrus
Shane Haslem,	Programme Director, Project Stratum, Fibrus
Steve Edwards,	Programme Director, Project Stratum, Fibrus

Key issues discussed included: the rollout that will deliver gigabit-capable broadband infrastructure to over 76,000 premises in Northern Ireland, the vast improvement to infrastructure needed to ensure fast Broadband is available to all, the need in 2021 to have access to superfast broadband as more and more services move online and the creation of jobs by Fibrus to deliver the project.

Agreed: to write to the Minister high-lighting the issues discussed during the briefing.

The witnesses left the meeting at 11.58am



Northern Ireland
Assembly

3. Apologies

As noted above.

4. Draft Minutes

Agreed: the Committee agreed the Minutes from 23rd March 2021.

Agreed: the Committee agreed the Minutes from 24th March 2021.

Agreed: the Committee agreed the minutes from the Concurrent meeting of the Economy, Infrastructure and Agriculture Committees held on 24th March 2021.

5. Chairpersons Business

The Chairperson welcomed Mervyn Storey to the Committee and wished a speedy recovery to Gordon Dunne.

The Chairperson informed Members of correspondence between herself and the Minister regarding the Economic Recovery Action Plan (ERAP).

Agreed: to schedule a meeting with the Minister regarding the ERAP.

The Chairperson informed Members that the Clerk has met with Include Youth regarding Essential Skills and the loss of funding it receives for its programmes.

Agreed: to write to the Department highlighting the need for programs such as this to be core funded in line with the Department's wider policy objectives



Northern Ireland
Assembly

and copy in the Department for Health, Department for Communities and the Department for Education and respective Committees.

The Chairperson updated Members on the informal meeting with the Ulster University Vice Chancellor.

The Chairperson highlighted to Members the 'NI College of the Future Report'

The Committee agreed to move into closed session at 12.00pm

6. Research and Information Service (RaISe) Briefing - Sectors and Productivity

The Official joined the meeting at 12.00pm

Members received a briefing from:

Christopher Rothwell, Research Officer, NIA Research Office

Key issues discussed included: the current Economic Performance, the current state of the NI Labour Market, the key sectors and productivity in Northern Ireland and Economic Impact on certain sectors.

The Official left the meeting at 12.33pm

The Committee agreed to return to open session at 12.34pm

7. Matters Arising

Noted: Members noted a response from the Minister regarding financial assistance for independent wedding venues.



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Agreed: to the Clerk to forward the correspondence to wedding venue owners who have contacted the Committee.

Noted: Members noted a briefing paper from the Department on the 2021/22 budget

Agreed: to schedule a budget briefing from the Department.

Noted: Members noted a response from the Department on how the Community Renewal Fund will be delivered.

Agreed: to share this response with the EU Affairs Manager.

Agreed: to write to the Finance Minister and the Executive Office sharing the concerns of the Committee.

Members agreed to deal with the remaining items of Agenda Item 7 via correspondence.

8. Energy Strategy Policy Options Consultation

Members agreed to deal with Agenda Item 8 via correspondence.

9. SL1 – Employment Rights (NI) Order 1996 (Protection from Suffering Detriment in Health and Safety Cases) (Amendment) (Order) (Northern Ireland) 2021

Members considered SL1 – Employment Rights (NI) Order 1996 (Protection from Suffering Detriment in Health and Safety Cases) (Amendment) (Order) (Northern Ireland) 2021.

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



Northern Ireland
Assembly

10. SL1 - Corporate Insolvency and Governance Act 2020 (Coronavirus) (Suspension of Liability for Wrongful Trading) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2021

Members considered SL1 - Corporate Insolvency and Governance Act 2020 (Coronavirus) (Suspension of Liability for Wrongful Trading) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2021.

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

11. SL1 - The Administration (Restrictions on Disposal etc, to Connected Persons) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2021

Members considered SL1 - The Administration (Restrictions on Disposal etc, to Connected Persons) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2021

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

12. SR 2021/000 The Corporate Insolvency and Governance Act 2020 (Coronavirus (Change of Expiry Date in section 32(1)) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2021

Members noted SR 2021/000 The Corporate Insolvency and Governance Act 2020 (Coronavirus) (Change of Expiry Date in section 32(1)) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2021



Northern Ireland
Assembly

13. SR 2021/73 The Employment Rights (Increase of Limits) Order (Northern Ireland) 2021

Members considered SR 2021/73 The Employment Rights (Increase of Limits) Order (Northern Ireland) 2021.

Question put and agreed:

“That the Committee for the Economy has considered the SR 2021/73 The Employment Rights (Increase of Limits) Order (Northern Ireland) 2021 and has no objection to the Rule, subject to the Examiner of Statutory Rules’ report.”

14. SR 2021/75 The Corporate Insolvency and Governance Act 2020 (Coronavirus) (Amendment of Certain Relevant Periods) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2021

Members considered SR 2021/75 The Corporate Insolvency and Governance Act 2020 (Coronavirus) (Amendment of Certain Relevant Periods) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2021.

Question put and agreed:

“That the Committee for the Economy has considered the SR 2021/75 The Corporate Insolvency and Governance Act 2020 (Coronavirus) (Amendment of Certain Relevant Periods) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2021 and has no objection to the Rule, subject to the Examiner of Statutory Rules’ report.”



Northern Ireland
Assembly

15. SR 2021/85 The Education (Student Fees and Support) (Amendment) (No.2) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2021

Members considered SR 2021/85 The Education (Student Fees and Support) (Amendment) (No.2) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2021.

Question put and agreed:

“That the Committee for the Economy has considered the SR 2021/85 The Education (Student Fees and Support) (Amendment) (No.2) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2021 and has no objection to the Rule, subject to the Examiner of Statutory Rules’ report.”

16. Correspondence

Members agreed to deal with Agenda Item 16 via correspondence.

17. Any Other Business

There were no items of business.

18. Date, Time and Place of the next meeting

The next meeting of the Committee will take place on Wednesday 21st April 2021 in Room 29, Parliament Buildings at 10am.

The meeting was adjourned at 1.00pm



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Dr Caoímhe Archibald MLA
Chairperson, Committee for the Economy
21st April 2021