



Northern Ireland  
Assembly

# Committee for the Economy

## Minutes of Proceedings

22<sup>nd</sup> September 2021

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

**Present:**

Dr Caoímhe Archibald (MLA (Chairperson))

Mr Keith Buchanan MLA

Mr Mike Nesbitt MLA

Mr John O'Dowd MLA

Mr Peter Weir MLA

**Present by Video or Teleconference:**

Ms Sinéad McLaughlin MLA (Deputy Chairperson)

Mr Stewart Dickson MLA

Ms Claire Sugden MLA

**Apologies:**

Mr Stephen Dunne MLA

**In Attendance:**

Mr Peter Hall (Assembly Clerk)

Mr Thomas Manning (Clerical Officer)



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**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 10:07am in open session.

**1. Apologies**

As noted above.

**2. Chairperson's Business**

The Chairperson raised the issue of the ongoing issues with Co2 supply to local manufactures and food producers.

**Agreed:** to write to the Department seeking an update on the issue.

**Agreed:** to seek the views of local business to ascertain any impacts this has had.

**3. Draft Minutes**

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed the Minutes from 15<sup>th</sup> September 2021.



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**4. Parental Bereavement (Leave and Pay) Bill - Briefing from the NI Human Rights Commission**

The witnesses joined the meeting at 10:10am

Members received a briefing from:

**Ms Alyson Kilpatrick,**

**Chief Commissioner, Northern  
Ireland Human Rights  
Commission**

**Ms Sarah Simms,**

**Policy Officer, Northern Ireland  
Human Rights Commission**

Key issues discussed included the role of the NI Human Rights Commission, the support for the Bill from the NIHRC, the opportunity to go beyond the current GB legislation to offer further protections and their concerns around the 26-week qualifying period for pay in the Parental Bereavement Bill and impact on those on zero hour contracts.

**Agreed:** to forward the written submission from NIHRC to the Department asking for an urgent response on whether a Human Rights Impact Assessment was carried out on the Bill.

The witnesses left the meeting at 10:32am



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**5. Briefing from the University of Exeter Academics - Energy Governance for Northern Ireland**

The witnesses joined the meeting at 10:53am

Members received a briefing from:

**Dr Richard Lowes,**

**Research Fellow, University of  
Exeter Energy Policy Group**

**Professor Catherine Mitchell,**

**Professor of Energy Policy,  
University of Exeter**

Key issues discussed included Energy Governance for the Northern Ireland Energy Transition Report, the Energy Strategy in development by the Department, the current issues in the energy sector, climate change targets and the need to reform how we build homes and buildings for energy efficiency.

The witnesses left the meeting at 11:48am

**6. Matters Arising**

**Noted:** Members noted a copy of correspondence from the Communities Committee to the DfE DALO, expressing concern at the administration of the High Street Voucher Scheme.

**Agreed:** to consider the response once it is received.



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**Noted:** Members noted an update from the Assembly's EU Affairs Manager on Common Frameworks and the indicative dates for these to come to Committee.

**Noted:** Members noted a copy of correspondence from the English Language Teaching Sector to the Economy Minister asking that English language teaching schools are included within the Tourism Recovery Action Plan.

**Agreed:** to write to the Minister encouraging he engages with the Businesses impacted.

**Noted:** Members noted a response from the Quality Assurance Agency for Higher Education regarding the LCM on the Higher Education Cheating Services Prohibition Bill.

**Agreed:** to ask the Department for an updated timeline for the LCM.

**Noted:** Members noted a response from the NUS-USI regarding the LCM on Higher Education Cheating Services Prohibition Bill.

**Noted:** Members noted a response from the Minister regarding the Community Renewal Fund.

**Agreed:** to seek an update from the Minister.

**Noted:** Members noted a response from the Department to the Committee's request for an update on the Presbyterian Mutual Society.

**Noted:** Members noted a response from the Ulster University regarding the LCM on the Higher Education Cheating Services Prohibition Bill.

### 7. Parental Bereavement (Leave and Pay) Bill

Members considered a number of papers in relation to the Parental Bereavement (Leave and Pay) Bill.



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**8. SR 2021/268 The High Street (Coronavirus, Financial Assistance) Scheme Regulations**

Members agreed to defer this agenda item as no papers had been received from the Department.

**9. SR 2021/253 (C.10) The Employment Act (Northern Ireland) 2016 (Commencement No. 4) Order (Northern Ireland) 2021**

Members noted SR 2021/253 (C.10) The Employment Act (Northern Ireland) 2016 (Commencement No. 4) Order (Northern Ireland) 2021.

**Agreed:** to await the further information requested following last week's meeting.

**10. SI - The EU Research and Development Programmes (Revocation) (EU Exit) Regulations 2021**

Members agreed to defer this agenda item as no papers had been received from the Department.

**11. Correspondence**

**Noted:** Members noted a copy of correspondence from Lord Jay on harmonised rules on AI and amending certain union legislative acts.

**Noted:** Members noted a copy of the DfE Monthly Economic Update for September 2021.

**Noted:** Members noted a copy of the Second Report of the Examiner of Statutory Rules 2021 – 2022.



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**Noted:** Members noted correspondence from the Finance Committee regarding its call for evidence on the Defamation Bill.

**Agreed:** to forward this to the Department for any views on the provisions or impact of the Bill from a DfE perspective.

**Noted:** Members noted a copy of a response from DfE to the Communities Committee regarding measures to alleviate the rise in energy costs.

**Noted:** Members noted correspondence from the DALO regarding the making the Insolvency Practitioners (Recognised Professional Bodies) (Revocation of Recognition) Order (NI) 2021.

**Noted:** Members noted a copy of a report by Renewable NI on a 'Pathway to a zero-carbon electricity system in Northern Ireland'.

### 12. Forward Work Programme

**Agreed:** Members agreed the Committee Draft Forward Work Programme.

**Agreed:** to schedule briefings from the Utility Regulator and Consumer Council

### 13. Any Other Business

Members discussed the current issues around student accommodation at Queen's University, Belfast.

**Agreed:** to write to QUB seeking an update.

Members agreed to move to Closed Session at 12.03pm



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#### **14. Committee Business**

Members discussed a report by the Public Accounts Committee on the NIRO.

**The meeting was adjourned at 12.06pm.**

**Dr Caoímhe Archibald MLA  
Chairperson, Committee for the Economy  
29<sup>th</sup> September 2021**