



**Northern Ireland
Assembly**

ENTERPRISE, TRADE AND INVESTMENT

MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS

16 JANUARY 2014

ROOM 30, PARLIAMENT BUILDINGS 10.00AM.

- Present:
- Mr Patsy McGlone (Chairperson)
 - Mr Phil Flanagan (Deputy Chairperson)
 - Mr Steven Agnew
 - Mr Sydney Anderson
 - Mr Sammy Douglas
 - Mr Gordon Dunne
 - Ms Megan Fearon
 - Mr Paul Frew
 - Mr Fearghal McKinney
 - Mr Mitchel McLaughlin
 - Ms Sandra Overend
- In Attendance:
- Mr Jim McManus (Assembly Clerk)
 - Ms Angela McParland (Assistant Assembly Clerk)
 - Mr Nathan McVeigh (Clerical Supervisor)
 - Ms Jacqueline Holt (Clerical Officer)
- Apologies: None

The meeting began at 10.10am in public session.

1. Apologies

There were no apologies.

2. Minutes of meeting held on Thursday 12 December 2013.

Agreed: The Committee agreed the draft minutes of 12 December 2013.

3. Chairperson's Business

Sydney Anderson joined the meeting at 10.11am

The Chairperson informed members that he had received an invitation from the Attorney General to attend a conference on Model Rules for EU Administrative Procedures but was unable to attend.

Members noted an invitation from Mr Roy Beggs MLA to a consultation on the Scrap Metal Dealers (NI), Private Members Bill.

4. DETI Website and Online Presence - Oral Briefing from DETI

The official joined the meeting at 10.12am

Members received an oral briefing from Wendy Johnston, Director of Human Resources and Central Support Division.

Key issues discussed included: the current status of the review of the DETI website, the planned way forward and the timescales of the review.

Sandra Overend joined the meeting at 10.23am

Megan Fearon joined the meeting at 10.24am

Agreed: the Department to provide to the Committee, a further oral briefing in the autumn, a copy of its auditing template and updates on the progress of the review.

The official left the meeting at 10.51am

5. Northern Ireland Sub Regional Economic Data - Oral Briefing from Assembly Research

The Research Officer joined the meeting at 10.51am

Members received a briefing from Aidan Stennett, Research Officer

Key issues discussed included: an overview of the paper prepared by the Research Officer.

Agreed: that Assembly Research establish what is being done sub regionally at EU level, check what statistics are available on travel to work and provide feedback to the Committee on the DETI website.

Agreed: to forward a link to the research paper to Dr John Bradley, the Department and Invest NI for comment.

Agreed: to forward a link to the research paper to NICVA and the Economic Advisory Group for information.

The Research Officer left the meeting at 11.15am

6. Matters Arising

Members considered a letter from the Utility Regulator Chief Executive advising that the Committee seek the further information it requires on the technical abilities and suitability of the tie lines at Enniskillen and Letterkenny from the System Operator for Northern Ireland who has direct control of the tie lines.

Agreed: to write to the System Operator for Northern Ireland about this issue.

Members considered a response from the Fermanagh Trust to the decision by SSE Airtricity to increase their Community Fund for all newly constructed projects to £5000 per megawatt.

Agreed: to forward the response to SSE Airtricity.

Members considered a response from the Department which provided further information on a range of issues, requested by the Committee, regarding the Programme for Government Delivery Plans to 30 September 2013.

Agreed: to ask the Department, what is being done to address the issue of increasing connection costs for small generators due to the need to upgrade lines to accommodate the generation.

Members noted a response from the Department to the Committee on whether the Department has any plans to change the Programme for Government target in relation to the Renewable Heat Incentive Scheme.

Members considered a response from the Minister of Finance and Personnel detailing the current position of renewable energy being used in public buildings.

Agreed: that Steven Agnew forward to the Committee the Assembly questions he submitted in relation to this issue.

Members considered a response from the Department to the Committee's request as to whether the small scale Feed-in Tariff analysis will be used to inform the proposed Energy Bill.

Agreed: to ask the Department why the Energy Bill has been delayed.

Members noted a response from the Department which provided further information, requested by the Committee, in regards to the oral briefing on the January Monitoring Round.

Members considered a request, from the Department, to forward a copy of the response from the Special European Union Programme Body, in regards to the sourcing of EU monies for Ring Fenced Easements and EU Internal Reallocations, when this becomes available.

Agreed: to forward a copy of the response to the Department when it is received.

Members considered a response from the Department to a report from D'Arcy Smith Associates on Horizon 2020 in a North South context.

Agreed: to write to the Department asking, considering €80.5 has been drawn down from North-South collaborative programmes, how much has been drawn down in Northern Ireland from programmes not involving the South.

Members noted a summary, provided by the Department, of responses to a public consultation on the Northern Ireland draft ERDF Programme for 2014-20.

Members considered responses from the Department, Utility Regulator and Northern Ireland Electricity to the Committee's request for comment on intelligent energy systems as an alternative to grid strengthening following the briefing on the Foresight Study into Sustainable Energy.

Agreed: to forward all three responses to the Sustainable Energy Horizon Panel for information.

Agreed: to forward the Northern Ireland Electricity and Utility Regulator responses to the Department for comment on the apparent difference of opinion.

7. January Monitoring Supplementary – Written Briefing from DETI

Members noted a written briefing from the Department providing supplementary information in relation to the January Monitoring Round.

8. Onshore Renewable Electricity Action Plan (OREAP) 2013-2020 – Strategic Environmental Assessment – Written Briefing from DETI

Members noted a written briefing from the Department regarding the Onshore Renewable Electricity Action Plan (OREAP) 2013-2020 - Strategic Environmental Assessment.

Agreed: to forward the briefing to the Committee for the Environment, to inform its Inquiry into Wind Energy.

9. Consumer Rights Bill – update from Minister – Legislation

Members considered an update from the Minister on the Consumer Rights Bill.

Agreed: to write to the Department asking for the rationale of bringing this legislation through a legislative consent motion rather than legislation in the Assembly and if it has any impact on the statutory role of the Consumer Council.

Gordon Dunne joined the meeting at 11.35am

10. Credit Unions and Industrial and Provident Societies Bill – Consultation

Members considered a summary of responses to the Credit Unions and Industrial and Provident Societies Bill and the Department's post consultation decision.

Agreed: to receive an oral briefing from the Department on the outcomes of the consultation and its proposals.

11. Correspondence

Members noted the following items of correspondence for action;

- i. Members noted correspondence from the Department for Employment and Learning, inviting members to attend stakeholder forums the Minister for Employment and Learning is hosting to inform his Department's on-going review of youth training.
- ii. From the Chair of the Committee for the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister, regarding its recent Delivering Social Change Signature Programmes event asking for the Committee's views on

comments raised by stakeholders on the Social Enterprise Incubation Hubs Programme.

Agreed: to write to the Department for confirmation of where responsibility for the social economy rests and how each Department contributes to it and what responsibility DETI and Invest NI has for Social Enterprise Hubs.

Agreed: to ask the Department why they set aside, in this case, the requirement to use a derelict building instead of a functioning one and was this done in any other cases.

- iii. Members noted correspondence from the Irish Congress of Trade Unions in relation to the RIDDOR consultation.
- iv. From the Chair of the Petrol Retailers Association which includes correspondence to the Minister expressing the organisation's views on the ACCC policy move to curb supermarket deep discounting and an invitation to attend their Regional Forum and a Roadshow.

Agreed: to receive the agenda for the Regional Forum when it is available, and members to inform the Committee Office if they wish to receive a reminder to attend the Roadshow in October.

- v. From the Committee for Finance and Personnel in respect of Post Project Evaluations (PPEs)

Agreed: to forward to the Department to ascertain the reasons for the delays in completing Post Project Evaluations.

- vi. An invitation to the Deputy Chair to a two day event entitled 'Cross Border Economic Development and the Border Development Zone Concept' which is being organised by the Centre for Cross Border Studies and the International Centre for Local and Regional Development.

Agreed: that, as the Deputy Chair is unable to attend, Assembly Research attend and report back to the Committee.

- vii. From the Minister regarding her consent to make regulations to revoke the Gas Transit Regulations 1992.

Agreed: that the Committee is content with the proposals.

- viii. Members noted correspondence from the Committee for Employment and Learning inviting the Committee to join them on its visit to the university of Ulster, Coleraine campus, and Seagate Technologies on Wednesday 30 April.

- ix. From the Committee for Education regarding its ‘STEM is cool’ stakeholder event to be held in Parliament Buildings on Wednesday 29 January.

Agreed: that the Deputy Chairperson will attend on behalf of the Chairperson.

- x. From the Committee for the Environment regarding its Inquiry into Wind Energy.

Agreed: to write to the Committee for the Environment informing them that the Committee’s current review of electricity pricing will consider the impact of wind energy incentives on pricing and suggest they contact the Fermanagh Trust in relation to community benefits from wind energy developments.

- xi. From the Committee for Finance and Personnel regarding the 2015/16 Budget process.

Agreed: to forward to the Department to arrange an oral briefing at the appropriate time.

- xii. From the Committee for the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister in regards to the European Commission Work Programme for 2014.

Agreed: to write to the Department to consider its priorities in relation to the work programme.

- xiii. From the Quarry Products Association (Northern Ireland) Ltd regarding its response to the European Commission in relation to the investigation into certain Aggregates Levy exemptions.

Agreed: to write to the Quarry Products Association Northern Ireland offering the support of the Committee.

- xiv. From the Northern Ireland Assembly and Business Trust inviting members to an education visit to a ‘passive house’.

Agreed: to notify the Northern Ireland Assembly and Business Trust of those members who wish to attend the visit.

Members noted the following items of correspondence;

- i. To the Chair from the Northern Ireland Affairs Committee.
- ii. To the Committee for the Environment from the Department regarding the percentage of renewable energy in Northern Ireland generated by wind energy.

- iii. From the Minister to the Chair of the Committee for Culture, Arts and Leisure regarding the Commonwealth Games 2014.
- iv. From the Committee for the Environment to the Department regarding the Committee's Inquiry into Wind Energy.
- v. From the Minister to the Chair of the Committee for Culture, Arts and Leisure regarding an oral briefing by the Northern Ireland Tourist Board.

12. Forward Work Programme

Members considered a copy of the Committee's Forward Work Programme up to 10 April 2014.

Mitchel McLaughlin left the meeting at 11.50am

Sydney Anderson left the meeting at 11.55am

Phil Flanagan left the meeting at 11.57am

Agreed: the Committee was content with the Forward Work Programme and to schedule the necessary oral briefings, visits and events.

Agreed: to write to the Department to follow up on the Committee's request for further information regarding the report by Dr John Bradley and Professor Michael Best on 'Cross-Border Economic Renewal: Rethinking Regional Policy in Ireland'.

13. Any other business

Sydney Anderson returned to the meeting at 11.58am

Agreed: to send a letter to Thales Air Defence congratulating them on the winning of a new contract.

14. Date, time and place of next meeting

The next meeting of the Committee will take place on **23 January 2014** at **10.00am** in **Room 30, Parliament Buildings.**

The meeting went into closed session at 11.58am

15. Electricity Policy Review – Closed Session

Phil Flanagan returned to the meeting at 11.58am

Megan Fearon returned to the meeting at 12.02pm

Paul Frew joined the meeting at 12.27pm

Sydney Anderson left the meeting at 12.51pm

Megan Fearon left the meeting at 1.02pm

Members considered the draft report for the Committee's Electricity Policy Review.

Agreed: to write to the Utility Regulator in relation to the retail IT system and request information on the process for customers switching energy providers.

Agreed: to write to the Department asking to what extent energy issues, including electricity, are discussed at meetings of the North South Ministerial Council.

The Chair adjourned the meeting at 1.29pm

Mr Patsy McGlone
Chairperson
Committee for Enterprise, Trade and Investment

23 January 2014