



**Northern Ireland
Assembly**

ENTERPRISE, TRADE AND INVESTMENT

MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS

06 FEBRUARY 2014

ROOM 30, PARLIAMENT BUILDINGS 10.00AM.

- Present: Mr Patsy McGlone (Chairperson)
Mr Phil Flanagan (Deputy Chairperson)
Mr Steven Agnew
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: Mr Sydney Anderson

The meeting began at 10.14am in public session.

1. Apologies

Apologies were noted, as listed above.

2. Declaration of Interests

The Chairperson reminded members that under Standing Orders, ‘Before taking part in any debate or proceeding of the Assembly or its committees, a member shall declare any interest, financial or otherwise, which is relevant to that debate or proceeding, where such interest is held by the member or an immediate relative’.

3. Minutes of meeting held on Thursday 30 January 2014.

Agreed: The Committee agreed the draft minutes of 30 January 2014.

4. Chairperson’s Business

Members noted a point of order raised by a member at last week’s meeting regarding comments made during the meeting.

5. Northern Ireland’s Export Base – Oral Briefing from Northern Ireland Chamber of Commerce

The representatives joined the meeting at 10.19am

Members received an oral briefing from Mark Nodder, President, NI Chamber of Commerce, Ann McGregor, Chief Executive, NI Chamber of Commerce, Maureen O’Reilly, Independent Economist and Richard Bell, Managing Director, Solmatix.

Key issues discussed included: statistics on the levels of Northern Ireland exports and lessons that can be learnt from other jurisdictions.

The representatives left the meeting at 11.41am

Agreed: the Northern Ireland Chamber of Commerce provide the Committee with a summary of its report ‘Exporting: the Challenge’ and information on the HGV levy.

Megan Fearon left the meeting at 11.42am

6. SL1 Renewables Obligation (Amendment) Order (Northern Ireland) 2014 – Oral Briefing from DETI

The official joined the meeting at 11.44am

Members received an oral briefing from Michael Harris, Head of Renewable Electricity Policy Branch.

Key issues discussed included: the purpose of the rule.

Agreed: to forward the London School of Economics Report to the Committee for the Environment to inform its Inquiry into Wind Energy.

Agreed: to ask the Department for information on the rental rate that is usually paid to land owners for the use of Solar PV panels and if it has shared its concerns regarding planning delays for Solar PV with the Department of the Environment and if so what was its response.

Agreed: the Department to provide further information on evidence that the cost of Solar PV panels is falling and will continue to fall over the next few years, on the levels of Solar PV panels that are imported from China and a copy of the Northern Ireland Electricity report explaining the long lead in times for grid connection regarding Solar PV.

Gordon Dunne left the meeting at 11.46am

Megan Fearon returned to the meeting at 12.01pm

Megan Fearon left the meeting at 12.20pm

Mitchel McLaughlin left the meeting at 12.26pm

Sammy Douglas left the meeting at 12.37pm

The official left the meeting at 12.41pm

7. Matters Arising

Members noted a response from the Department to the follow up query by the Committee on how the Department is making businesses aware of the exemptions listed under the Combined Heat and Power (CHP) Quality Assurance (CHPQA) Programme.

Members considered a response from the Department addressing the Committee's query as to the rationale for bringing the Consumer Right's Bill legislation through a Legislative Consent Motion in Westminster rather than through legislation in the Assembly and whether this has any impact on the statutory role of the Consumer Council.

Agreed: to receive an oral briefing from the Department on the Consumer Right's Bill.

Members considered a response from the Department to the Committee's request for information on what is being done to address the issue of increasing connection costs for small generators due to the need to upgrade lines to accommodate generation.

Agreed: to receive an oral briefing from the Utility Regulator on this issue.

Agreed: to receive a written briefing from the Department on issues surrounding grid connection for small-scale renewables generation.

Members considered correspondence from Lauri McCusker, Chief Executive of the Fermanagh Trust, as a follow up to his briefing on 23 January 2014.

Agreed: to forward the correspondence to the Department for information.

Members considered a response from the Department to the Committee's request for further information on the Social Enterprise Incubation Hubs Project, following correspondence from the Committee for the Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister which the Committee considered at its meeting of 16 January 2014.

Agreed: Forward to the Committee for Social Development and the Committee for the Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister for information.

Members considered a response from the Department on the DETI consultation document, Future Arrangements for Consumer Representation in NI.

Agreed: to write to the Consumer Council congratulating it on the role played to get the money refunded to Altnagelvin Hospital from Northern Ireland Water.

Members considered a motion for debate in plenary regarding financial assistance for Northern Ireland credit unions.

Agreed: the Committee is content with the motion subject to a minor amendment.

Members considered a response from Dr John Bradley providing, to the Committee, brief observations on the research paper which the Committee forwarded to him.

Agreed: to forward the response to the Department and the Economic Advisory Group for comment.

8. Committee EU Priorities – Committee response to the Committee for the Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister

Members considered a draft Committee response to the Committee for the Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister regarding Committee EU Priorities.

Agreed: to forward the response as amended to the Committee for the Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister.

9. Legislation: SL1 The Control of Major Accident Hazards (Amendment) Order (Northern Ireland) 2014

Steven Agnew left the meeting at 1.04pm

Members considered an SL1 regarding the Control of Major Accident Hazards (Amendment) Order (Northern Ireland) 2014.

Agreed: to ask the Department why the SL1 has come to the Committee at a late stage, not allowing the Committee adequate time to consider it before it is due to be introduced and for further information on the purpose of the Statutory Rule.

10. Consultation – Financial Capability Strategy for Northern Ireland

Members noted a summary of consultation responses regarding the Financial Capability Strategy for Northern Ireland.

11. Written Briefing from DETI – Further Scrutiny of PPEs – InterTradeIreland’s Acumen Programme February 2011 - present

Members noted a Written Briefing from DETI regarding Further Scrutiny of PPEs – InterTradeIreland’s Acumen Programme February 2011 – present.

12. Written Briefing from DETI – Better Regulation Annual Report 2012/13

Members noted a Written Briefing from DETI regarding Better Regulation Annual Report 2012/13.

13. Correspondence

Members noted the following items of correspondence for action;

- i. From the Committee for Finance and Personnel regarding its Inquiry into Flexible Working in the Public Sector in Northern Ireland.

Agreed: to ask the Department to respond directly to the Committee for Finance and Personnel and copy to this Committee.

- ii. From the Committee for OFMDFM regarding the NI Executive European Priorities 2013 – 2014 Mid-Year Progress Report.

Agreed: to contact OFMDFM asking for an update on the response to Committee queries from the Barosso Desk Officer in Brussels.

- iii. Members noted an invitation from the University of Ulster and Action Renewables to the launch of the renewable energy consultancy service, Commonpower.

- iv. Members noted an invitation from the Open University to a degree ceremony.

- v. From the Committee for Agriculture and Rural Development providing a copy of correspondence sent to the Department regarding the Rural Broadband Infrastructure Programme.

Agreed: that the Committee considers the Department's response when it issues.

- vi. From the Minister to the Chairperson regarding Sustainable Energy Legislative priorities for 2014.

Agreed: to ask the Department if any consideration has been given to increasing the levels of staffing in Energy Division given the large workload it currently has.

14. Forward Work Programme

Members considered the Committee Forward Work Programme.

Agreed: the Committee is content with the Forward Work Programme.

10. Any other business

There were no additional items of business.

11. Date, time and place of next meeting

The next meeting of the Committee will take place on **13 February 2014** at **10.00am** in **Seminar Room 2, Northern Ireland Science Park.**

The meeting went into closed session at 1.16pm

12. Electricity Policy Review – Closed Session

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

The Chair adjourned the meeting at 1.41pm

Mr Patsy McGlone
Chairperson
Committee for Enterprise, Trade and Investment

13 February 2014