



**Northern Ireland
Assembly**

ENTERPRISE, TRADE AND INVESTMENT

MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS

3 JULY 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
Mr Paul Frew
Mr Fearghal McKinney
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: Ms Megan Fearon
Mr Mitchel McLaughlin

The meeting began at 10.19am.

1. Apologies

Apologies were noted, as listed above.

2. Minutes of meeting held on Thursday 19 June 2014.

Agreed: The Committee agreed the draft minutes of 19 June 2014.

3. Chairperson's Business

Members discussed the possibility of holding the weekly Committee meeting on a different day.

Agreed: that the Clerk researches the possibility of the weekly Committee meeting being held on a different day.

Agreed: to discuss the Clerk's findings at the meeting of 11th September 2014 or during recess if necessary.

Members who attended the trade mission with Invest NI to San Diego and San Francisco, California, provided a synopsis of the visit to the Committee.

Members considered correspondence from Ekso Bionics, as a follow up to meeting with the Committee delegation in California and informing the Committee of their upcoming visit to Belfast.

Agreed: that those members who will be available also attend the meeting, to be held on 16th July 2014, between the Ekso representatives and the Minister of the Department for Health, Social Services and Public Safety.

Agreed: to ask the Committee for Health, Social Services and Public Safety if they would also like to attend the meeting on 16th July 2014.

Members noted a response from the Department providing an update on the Game of Thrones exhibition.

Members considered a response from the Department to the Committee's request for an update on the public consultation carried out regarding red tape to businesses.

Agreed: to ask the Department for a copy of 'Regulatory Barriers to Cross-Border Trade and Business' and 'A Simple Guide to Cross-Border Business'.

Members noted an update from the Department in respect of Post Project Evaluations.

Members considered a letter from Dr Caroline O'Kane, Information and Policy Officer at Enterprise NI, in response to the Committee's suggestion that Enterprise NI Work with the Northern Ireland Independent Retail Trade Association and the Federation of Small Businesses to co-ordinate a collaborative approach for a programme for retail incubation.

Agreed: to arrange a meeting between the Chairperson and Deputy Chairperson and Dr O’Kane.

Members considered a series of follow up questions for stakeholders for the Electricity Policy Review Part III, Grid Connections.

Agreed: that the questions are forwarded to the relevant stakeholders with a request that they respond by the end of July.

Agreed: the Clerk agrees any further follow-up questions with the Chairperson during recess.

The Chairperson reminded members that they were informed at the last meeting that Dr Leslie Budd had accepted the position of Specialist Advisor on Economic Policy to the Committee.

Agreed: the Clerk uses his discretion, in conjunction with the Chairperson, to send background information to Dr Budd.

Agreed: to invite Dr Budd to attend the relevant part of the Committee planning meeting on 11 September.

The Chairperson informed members that the Committee last received an oral briefing from the Economic Advisory Group on 16 May 2013 and has not had an update since. Members noted that the last meeting reported on the Group’s website was on 17 October 2013.

Agreed: to write to the Department asking for an update from the Economic Advisory Group with regards to the past 8 months.

The Chairperson informed members that it is normal practice for Committees to agree that authority be delegated to the Chairperson and/or Deputy Chairperson during periods of recess to submit views on the releasing or withholding of information in any non-routine or contentious Freedom of Information requests received. The Chairperson advised members that they would be informed of any such requests following the recess period.

Agreed: to delegate the authority to respond to Freedom of Information issues to the Chairperson and Deputy Chairperson over summer recess.

4. Oral briefing from the Utility Regulator: Electricity Policy Review Part II Electricity Pricing and Part III Grid Connections

The representatives joined the meeting at 10.38am.

Members received an oral briefing from Ms Jenny Pyper, Chief Executive, Ms Tanya Hedley, Director of Network Operations and Mr Jody O’Boyle, Electricity Networks Manager.

Key issues discussed included: connection policy, grid connection price control and investment, potential changes in legislation, grid connection quotation times from NIE, NIE internal review, contestability, Renewable Grid Liaison Group, growth of small scale renewable generation, Utility Regulator forward work programme.

Gordon Dunne left the meeting at 11.25am

Sydney Anderson left the meeting at 11.50am

Agreed: to write to the Utility Regulator asking for its ideas on improving NIE performance in relation to grid connection, for information on the impact the £420m which NIE states it would require to achieve the 40% renewable electricity target will have on consumer bills, for information regarding NIE Statement of Charges and as it has been reported that SONI made a loss of £3million in 2012 and a profit of £16million in 2013, to provide the Committee with the reason for the extreme differences in these figures.

The representatives left the meeting at 12.39pm.

5. Briefing from Assembly Research: Departmental Responsibilities in Oil and Gas Exploration

The researchers joined the meeting at 12.40pm.

Members received a briefing from Aidan Stennett, Research Officer and Suzie Cave, Research Officer.

Agreed: to forward the research paper to Assembly Legal Services and ask if the information provided by Assembly Research is consistent with the legal advice given to the Committee previously.

Agreed: to write to the Department of the Environment asking for up to date information from Planning Service, the Northern Ireland Environment Agency and any other statutory consultees, on any current activities being carried out by Infrastrata plc, Tamboran Resources Pty Limited, Rathlin Energy Limited and Provident Resources plc which have Petroleum Licences with the Department for Enterprise, Trade and Investment.

Agreed: to ask the Department for an update on current activities around the Petroleum Licences of PL1/10 Infrastrata plc, PL2/10 Tamboran Resources Pty Limited, PL3/10 Rathlin Energy Limited and PL5/10 Provident Resources plc, to include updates from any other relevant statutory consultees e.g. HSENI.

The researchers left the meeting at 12.58pm.

6. Matters Arising

Members noted correspondence from Byrne Partnership providing follow up information that the Committee requested at the oral briefing by the printing industry.

Members noted a copy of the report from the Brussels Liaison Officer entitled ‘Opportunities and Key Priorities for Social Enterprises in NI’ and a written briefing on what action is being taken as a result of the report.

Members considered a response from the Department to a series of questions the Committee had asked in relation to a written briefing on the Programme for Government Commitments Progress Report to 31 March 2014.

Agreed: to write to the Department of Finance and Personnel asking why there is a waiting time of six months for tourism figures produced by the Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NISRA).

Members noted a response from the Department to the Committee’s request for information on what work was being undertaken in relation to the broadband goals of the Digital Agenda for Europe to deliver better and faster broadband to areas in Northern Ireland that have little or no service.

Members noted a copy of a study which provided details of the work done by the Department to agree a target of 40% in renewable energy for the current Programme for Government.

Members noted a response from the Northern Ireland Tourist Board (NITB) in relation to its Capital Investment Programme and the Committee’s query regarding particular trends or themes in projects being withdrawn.

Members noted correspondence, forwarded to the Committee by the Public Accounts Committee, from a member of the public regarding a Freedom of Information request to the Department on the Presbyterian Mutual Society. The Chairperson reminded members that he had received the same correspondence from the member of the public and this had been discussed at last week’s meeting.

Members noted correspondence from the Consumer Council informing the Committee of a seminar on the Alternative Dispute Resolution to be held in Dublin on 30th September 2014 and hosted by the Law Society and the European Consumer Centre Ireland (ECC Ireland).

Agreed: members to contact the Committee Office regarding their attendance.

Members considered a copy of a report written by the Invest NI Scientific Services team in relation to Lowlands Health and Energy Ltd Connaught Carbon Neutral CHP and Balneotherapy project.

Agreed: to ask the Department to forward the report written by the Invest NI Scientific Services team to the complainants.

Members noted correspondence from the Department of Finance and Personnel responding to the Committee's request for clarification on apparent legislative barriers in Northern Ireland to the installation of free solar PV panels.

7. Legislation: SL1 Renewable Heat Incentive Scheme Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2014

Members considered an SL1 regarding the Renewable Heat Incentive Scheme Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2014.

Agreed: to ask the Department to clarify how the Department communicates with the sector on these issues to ensure relevant stakeholders are kept informed of the timelines of the legislative processes and whether deep geothermal energy is to be included in the scheme.

Agreed: the Chairperson given authority by the Committee to approve the SL1 if satisfied with the Department's response on the two issues raised.

8. Consultation: Legislative Proposals for Energy Licence Modifications and Appeals – Outcome of Consultation

Members noted the outcome of a consultation on Legislative Proposals for Energy Licence Modifications and Appeals.

9. Consultation: Proposed Revised Health and Safety Approved Codes of Practice (ACOPs)

Members noted correspondence from the Minister regarding consultations for the Proposed Revised Health and Safety Approved Codes of Practice (ACOPs).

10. Consultation: Proposed Changes to Renewables Obligation Certificate (ROC) Banding Levels for Small Scale Renewable Technologies

Members considered a consultation regarding Proposed Changes to Renewables Obligation Certificate (ROC) Banding Levels for Small Scale Renewable Technologies.

Agreed: to receive a summary of responses following consultation.

11. Consultation: REMIT – Strengthening the Regulation of Wholesale Energy Markets through New Criminal Offences

Members noted a consultation regarding REMIT – Strengthening the Regulation of Wholesale Energy Markets through New Criminal Offences.

12. Written Briefing from DETI: Tourism Update

Members noted a written briefing from the Department providing an update on tourism and a paper from NITB updating the Committee on the Quality and Assurance Programme.

13. Written Briefing from DETI: Updates on the Report on the Inquiry into Renewable Energy and the Strategic Energy Framework (SEF) Implementation Plan

Members noted a written briefing from the Department regarding updates on the Report on the Inquiry into Renewable Energy and the Strategic Energy Framework (SEF) Implementation Plan.

14. Northern Ireland Centre for Economic Policy (NICEP): Outlook Spring 2014

Members considered the Northern Ireland Centre for Economic Policy (NICEP) -Outlook Spring 2014.

Agreed: to receive an oral briefing from the Northern Ireland Centre for Economic Policy following recess.

15. Correspondence

Members noted the following items of correspondence:

- i. Members noted correspondence from the Northern Ireland Renewables Industry Group (NIRIG) providing a copy of the recently published NIRIG Community Best Guidance Practice.

Agreed: the document to be kept in the Committee Office for members.

- ii. From the Minister, providing an update on the progress by the Department in ensuring security of electricity supply is maintained and stating that the next stage of the procurement process for additional capacity relates to the consideration of formal bids.

Agreed: to await the decision on the provision of additional capacity.

- iii. Members noted correspondence from the Chairperson of the Committee for Culture, Arts and Leisure regarding this year's Dale farm Milk Cup.
- iv. Members noted correspondence from the Committee for Employment and Learning providing the Committee with a copy of a response it received from the Department for Employment and Learning regarding the shortage in trained analytical chemists in Northern Ireland.
- v. Members noted correspondence from the Minister regarding an othe future of tourism in Northern Ireland, following a review of NITB and wider tourism structures.
- vi. Members noted correspondence from NITB to the Committee for Regional Development in response to queries arising from the NITB oral evidence session on the Benefits of Cycling to the NI Economy.

16. Written Briefing from DETI: Review of NITB and Wider Tourism Structures Report and Consultation Document

Members considered a written briefing from the Department regarding the Review of NITB and Wider Tourism Structures Report and Consultation Document.

Agreed: to receive a summary of responses following consultation.

17. Written Briefing from Invest NI: Invest NI Operating Plan 2014-2015

Members considered a written briefing from Invest NI regarding its Operating Plan 2014-2015.

Agreed: to ask the Department, further to the answer to the written question AQW 34330/11-15, for information on the actual number of offers taken up, the total expenditure around those actually committed to and the businesses/projects that have successfully drawn down.

18. Any other business

Members considered a paper from the Department informing members that an application for a Petroleum licence from CHX Capital LLC for an area around Lough Neagh and extending as far east as Crawfordsburn, County Down, has been withdrawn.

Agreed: to ask the Department for information on why the application was withdrawn.

Agreed: to ask the Utility Regulator to forward the Committee a copy of the summary of responses to the consultation on the possible cancellation of the

Generating Unit Agreements and to delay the final decision until the Committee has had an opportunity to review this.

19. Date, time and place of next meeting

The next meeting of the Committee will take place on **18 September 2014** at **10.00am**.

The Chairperson adjourned the meeting at 1.26pm.

Mr Patsy McGlone
Chairperson
Committee for Enterprise, Trade and Investment

18 September 2014