

From the Office of the Minister  
Michelle Gildernew MP MLA



Department of  
**Agriculture and  
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*Dr McCrea, a chaire*

**COMMITTEE REPORT INTO RENEWABLE ENERGY AND ALTERNATIVE LAND USE.**

Thank you for your correspondence of 8 July relating to the ARD Committee Report into Renewable Energy and Alternative Land Use.

I welcome the ARD Committee's recognition of the importance of sustainable and renewable energy issues within the North, particularly for the Rural Community.

I have considered the recommendations from my Department and have received input, where appropriate from my Ministerial colleagues. My Department has co-ordinated the responses received and produced the attached composite paper for your information.

The attachment to this paper details the individual responses from each Department. Where a Departmental response didn't reference a specific recommendation, their response has been set against the recommendation which appeared most appropriate.

I note that two of the recommendations have been made for Executive consideration and understand that Minister Foster, who leads on energy issues, will shortly be proposing to the Executive that she should chair an Inter-Departmental Working Group to ensure effective coordination across departments.

I trust this is helpful to you.



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE

**MICHELLE GILDERNEW MP MLA**  
**Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development**

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An Roinn Talmhaíochta agus Forbartha Tuaithe  
Mánnystrie o Fairms an Kintra Fordèrin

**Michelle Gildernew MP MLA**

**Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development**

**CROSS-DEPARTMENTAL RESPONSE TO THE ARD COMMITTEE  
REPORT ON RENEWABLE ENERGY**

**Introduction**

Departments broadly welcome the ARD Committee's Report. It comes at a timely point in the development of policy. The renewables area continues to be a dynamic environment.

Department of Enterprise Trade and Investment (DETI) have lead responsibility for Energy, including renewable energy. It is recognised that other Departments have a significant role to play in facilitating the development and adoption of renewable energy and associated technologies.

**Statutory Progress**

Responses indicate that Government Departments are committed to the principles of sustainable development.

**Recommendation a:**

**On publication of the DETI Bio-Energy report, both DETI and DARD should examine it along with this report for areas of complementarity.**

On publication of the DETI Bio-energy report, both DETI and DARD will examine it along with the Report of the ARD Committee for areas of complementarity.

**The DETI response states:** 'In order to provide, for the first time, a detailed evidence based analysis from which to develop bio-energy policy and subsequent cross-departmental actions, DETI, on behalf of the IDG, appointed AEA Energy & Environment to assess the sustainable potential for bio-energy in Northern Ireland.'

The research proved complex and the IDG considered that it was essential to continue to work with the consultants beyond the target date for completion to ensure that the issues had been addressed and understood: the draft final report was received at the end of June.

The findings and recommendations of the report, as well as those of the ARD Committee, are being considered by the IDG members and will, as planned, form the basis of a cross-departmental action plan for bio-energy which will be issued for consultation later in 2008-09. The Agriculture Stakeholders Forum, newly appointed to review DARD's Renewable Energy Action Plan, and on which DETI is represented as an observer, will also benefit from these reports and it will be important to identify complementarities and synergies in respective roles going forward'.

**The DARD response states:** 'DARD is represented on the DETI-led Inter-Departmental Group on Bio-energy (IDG). This group was specifically established to;

- a) develop a more co-ordinated approach to bio-energy across Government Departments;
- b) optimise its sustainable contribution to a number of sectors eg Energy, Agriculture, Enterprise, Transport and Environment;
- c) contribute to renewable energy and greenhouse gas emission targets.

As an IDG member, DARD will play an active part in fully considering the DETI Report, which will form the basis for a cross-departmental Bio-Energy Action Plan. The DETI Report and the ARD Committee Report will also form part of the considerations to progress the work of the recently established DARD Agriculture Stakeholders Forum on Renewable Energy. This Forum recognises the importance of ensuring synergies and complementarities across information to advise the development of a sustainable and robust strategy for the future of renewable energy within the land-based and rural community.'

**Recommendation (b):**

**Government needs to seriously address the actions needed in order to achieve the PSA target of 12%. This should be addressed urgently.**

Departmental responses indicate that Northern Ireland is on track to meet the PSA target of 12% of energy deriving from renewable energy, as outlined below.

**Department of Education response states:** 'The Executive Programme for Government objective is to promote energy efficiency and the use of renewable energy by securing 12% of electricity consumption in the north of Ireland from indigenous renewable sources by 2012.'

Latest available figures as at 31<sup>st</sup> March 2006, show the Education Sector exceeding this target by sourcing 77% of electricity from renewable sources. This is mainly attributable to the Education and Library Boards switching from 'brown electricity', which is produced from fossil fuels, to Eco Energy which is electricity produced from renewable sources such as wind or solar power.'

**The DETI response states:** 'Northern Ireland currently has a renewable target of 12% of total electricity consumption to be met from indigenous renewable resources by 2012 and of that 12%, 15% to be met from non-wind sources. Indigenous renewables, mainly in the form of large scale wind, currently provide 6% of electricity consumption.'

On the basis of existing installed capacity and projects which are at different stages of development, DETI fully expects that the 2012 target will be met. If the current Energy from Waste projects proceed as planned, they would also contribute to the non-wind target.

It is critically important to continue to encourage the growth of non-wind renewables in Northern Ireland not only to meet future renewable energy targets, but also to increase the amount of renewable heat and reduce our dependence on imported fossil fuels.

In this context, bio-energy can be expected to make a contribution and, recognising this, DETI established in mid 2007 an Inter-departmental Group (IDG), which includes representatives from DARD, Invest NI, DoE, DRD and DFP to develop a more co-ordinated approach to bio-energy; to optimise its sustainable contribution to

a number of sectors eg energy, agriculture, enterprise, transport and environment; and contribute to renewable energy targets and greenhouse gas emission reduction targets.'

**The DOE response states:** ' A Northern Ireland target of 12% of energy consumption from renewable sources (equivalent to 400MW) by 2012 has been set (of which 15% should be non wind sources). As of 14<sup>th</sup> May 2008 Planning Service has consented in excess of 400MW of power from wind farms alone.'

**The DRD response states:** 'DRD is also aware of a draft EU Directive on Renewable Energy, published in January 2008, and which has potential implications for sustainable regional development and transport policies here. For example, the Directive proposes that we shall achieve at least a 10% share of renewable energy (primarily biofuels) in the transport sector by 2020. We are also contributing to the consultation on the UK Renewable Energy Strategy and will be meeting soon with colleagues in DETI to consider any implications and the way forward.'

**The DEL response states:** 'In February 2008 DEL provided an Evidence Paper to the DARD Committee which provided a comprehensive view of DEL's core business activities. At that time the Department assured the Committee of its commitment, within the scope of its core business, to support the efforts to achieve renewable energy targets and comply with procurement and construction guidance. It also provided the information available to DEL on the activity in this area by Further and Higher Education Institutions.'

### **DARD Renewables Action Plan**

#### **Recommendation c:**

**The Department of Agriculture and Rural Development should devise realistic timelines for implementing the Renewable Action Plan. This timeline should include key, challenging and measurable targets for the achievement of outputs.**

**The DARD response states:** 'The activities outlined in the DARD Renewable Energy Action Plan are being reviewed. An industry-led Agricultural Stakeholder Forum on Renewable Energy has been established by the Department to conduct this review and advise on a medium term strategy. This strategy will focus on activities, which will aim to maximise on the opportunities that exist for the landowner in relation to production and consumption of renewable energy. It is expected that the Forum will engage with the ARD Committee during their work programme. Any recommendations that the Forum may propose will include challenging and measurable targets along with a realistic delivery plan.'

**Recommendation d:**

**The Department should address, as a matter of urgency, the legal status of the Agri-Food Waste Challenge Fund (AFWCF) and the match funding element of the £10m renewables programme. The Department should also exploit potential funding available through the EU.**

**The DARD response states:** 'A full business needs analysis is being prepared in relation to determining the need and statutory basis of such a Fund. The renewables sector within the rural community is currently immature and it is important that the Department fully explore the most effective and efficient use of resource to ensure the maximum impact. Due to the dynamic and embryonic nature of this sector, it is important that the resources are focused and targeted to the most appropriate areas. The Department is revisiting the initial proposed scope of this fund to ensure that all appropriate technologies and activities can be captured and incentivised where appropriate in the most effective manner. Work continues to secure and exploit matching EU funding streams to supporting renewable energy activities within the rural community.'

**Recommendation e:**

**The Department needs to identify and communicate specific renewable energy funding programmes available through the Northern Ireland Rural Development Programme rather than generic measures that may or may not provide funding. Again, this should be taken as a matter of urgency.**

**The DARD response states:** 'The Short Rotation Coppice (SRC) Fund provides support for the establishment of wood-based short rotation coppice crops and is targeted at the renewable energy sector. Other programmes in the Northern Ireland Rural Development Programme (NIRDP) are generic to facilitate innovation and can provide support for renewable energy activities and technologies. A news sheet is published and distributed by DARD on a regular basis in relation to projects supported under Axis 1 of the NIRDP. Under CAP healthcheck and post 2010 it is expected that more emphasis will be placed on measures within the NIRDP that support renewable energy'

### **Opportunities for Farm and Rural Businesses**

#### **Recommendation f:**

**The Executive should increase the use of biomass as an energy source, introducing a hierarchy of its use. There is widespread agreement that the best use of biomass is for heating, replacing fossil fuels. Below that in the hierarchy comes electricity generation and finally liquid bio fuels, the least carbon-efficient use of biomass.**

**The OFMDFM response states:** 'The priorities of our Programme for Government are well established, and the development of renewable energy markets and solutions fit within these. It would appear that the renewable energy sector offers significant potential for growth and to contribute even more positively to the economy. This should offer an opportunity to more fully exploit particular sectors and add value to local industry. For example, the classification of forestry as a 'priority industry' similar to the approach taken within Scottish Enterprise, may act as an effective enabling mechanism to support the higher Programme for Government priorities while simultaneously complementing measures contained within the NI Rural Development Programme 2008-2013.'

**The DE response states:** 'While the benefits of biomass as an energy source are recognised by this Department, its use within the Education Sector is currently limited to heating.'

**The DEL response states:** 'DEL will continue to follow procurement and construction guidelines and is generally content with the thrust of the report in overall terms. Any financial implications of the recommendations would need to be carefully considered, and in particular we would have a query about the focus being placed on the biomass option (recommendations f and g) rather than other value for money alternatives for some projects, for example those of a geo thermal nature. Also, following recommendations f and g could mean that, for example, further and higher education institutions may be required to convert from their existing power sources, which would be likely to result in significant financial implications which are unknown at present.'

**The DETI response states that:** 'The Northern Ireland Renewable Obligation (NIRO) is Northern Ireland's main support mechanism for the large scale renewable generation of electricity and, like its counterparts in GB and Scotland, has always been open to all renewable technologies, including land based /rural technologies. Throughout the UK and also internationally, onshore wind has developed as the predominant renewable energy technology as it has been readily available and less problematic to harness than some other renewable sources. The NIRO has been very successful in securing multi-million pound investment by international companies in Northern Ireland in wind farm developments contributing to the current 6% renewable level.

However, it has been recognised that some other renewable energy technologies may require more assistance to reach commercially viable stage. In NI and GB, consultation exercises are underway proposing that the ROs across the UK should be "banded" to offer enhanced support to post –demonstration and emerging technologies including a range of land based technologies such as dedicated regular biomass, fuels created using advanced conversion technologies ( Anaerobic digestion, gasification, pyrolysis) dedicated biomass burning energy crops with or without CHP, dedicated regular biomass with CHP and all forms of microgeneration. It is envisaged that this additional incentive will become operational by April 2009, subject to the results of the consultation and the Assembly's consent, and will provide further support for the greater use of land based/rural renewable technologies.



The recently completed DETI led Cross-departmental study into the sustainable development of bio-energy in Northern Ireland acknowledged the potential for bio-energy to make a limited contribution to Northern Ireland's renewable energy needs and help reduce greenhouse gases. This was, however, conditional on the implementation of a range of actions including very significant levels of financial support. It confirmed that, in Northern Ireland, the focus should be on the use of biomass for heat and electricity rather than for transport fuels.

As noted above, this report will provide the evidence base for policy development and ongoing intervention as part of the cross-departmental approach to increase bio-energy's contribution to Northern Ireland's energy needs. Following public consultation, this approach will be submitted for endorsement by the Executive in 2008-09.'

### **Market Certainty**

#### **Recommendation g:**

**Public sector procurement should favour biomass heating solutions, helping to create the market demand to stimulate the industry. Such a commitment would be aligned with the Government's climate change and sustainable development objectives.**

**The OFMDFM response states:** 'Naturally we would expect that the principles of sustainability are embedded into all the actions and solutions which may emanate from this report, taking into account the social and economic considerations as well as the more obvious environmental ones.'

**The DCAL response states:** 'I should also point out that through the Architecture and Built Environment Policy Launched in June 2006, the Department is advocating sustainable development measures which are designed to reduce energy consumption and carbon emissions.'

**The DE response states:** 'The Department's approach to sustainable design, in

accordance with the Procurement Board recommendations, is to achieve a Building Research Establishment Environmental Assessment Method (BREEAM) rating of 'excellent'. To favour one particular system would be reducing the design team's freedom to come up with the best overall proposals for a particular school and could also have cost implications.'

**The DRD response states:** 'DRD is responsible for the Regional Development Strategy (RDS) and the Regional Transportation Strategy (RTS). The issue of renewable energy is relevant to both as they are based on the principles of sustainable development. Both Strategies are the subject of review which will consider sustainable development and issues including renewable energy.'

**The DEL response:** at recommendation f above also refers to this recommendation it states that 'DEL will continue to follow procurement and construction guidelines and is generally content with the thrust of the report in overall terms. Any financial implications of the recommendations would need to be carefully considered, and in particular we would have a query about the focus being placed on the biomass option (recommendations f and g) rather than other value for money alternatives for some projects, for example those of a geo thermal nature. Also, following recommendations f and g could mean that, for example, further and higher education institutions may be required to convert from their existing power sources, which would be likely to result in significant financial implications which are unknown at present.'

**The DFP response states:** 'The DFP Minister congratulates the DARD Committee on this report. He looks forward to working with Executive colleagues in advancing the sustainability agenda in Northern Ireland and has no doubt that this report will assist greatly in addressing the issues pertinent to the rural community.'

### **Business Market Focus**

#### **Recommendation h:**

**Measures in the three axes of the NIRDP should be used to facilitate the establishment of ESCOs (or similar). The NIRDP could also support training in**

**the necessary business practices to set up the companies, develop proposals, negotiate contracts with end users and promote the widespread use adoption of successful small-scale RE business models.**

**The DARD response states:** Energy supply chain relationships are relatively immature in Northern Ireland, and therefore it is important that a number of business models should be explored and exploited to demonstrate where the real business potential lies for the landowner. A successful example of this is the recently established Biomass Energy Group, which stemmed from the DARD funded E-BIDS scheme. This scheme was devised to support the development of facilities and supply chains of the SRC Willow biomass industry in Northern Ireland.

Training and awareness of renewable energy technologies have been delivered to over 1500 farmers to date. Over the past 15 months the Department has initiated seven technology-transfer projects at CAFRE including farm energy efficiency, biomass boilers and renewable crops, including SRC Willow. Renewable technologies are demonstrated on site at both Loughry and Greenmount.

The work of the Agricultural Stakeholder Forum on Renewable Energy will consider capability in the agricultural sector to support the adoption of renewable energy activities.

### **Non Wind Renewable Energy**

#### **Recommendation i:**

**The Committee believes that the Executive should be pro-active in its support for low-carbon innovation, being prepared to challenge its own aversion to risk in its support for the development of renewable energy schemes The Executive**

**should review current funding schemes and consider successor funding to ensure the ongoing development of the non-wind renewable energy sector.**

**The DETI response states:** 'Non-wind technologies, such as marine, solar, geothermal as well as bio-energy have, as noted above, all been eligible for support under the NIRO and, under the proposed new banding scheme, would be eligible for enhanced support to encourage their ongoing development to support the generation of renewable electricity in Northern Ireland.'

The DETI administered Reconnect household renewable energy programme was funded under the Environmental and Renewable Energy Fund, a direct rule initiative, which was always planned to end on 31 March 2008. Due to the level of interest in Reconnect, DETI secured additional funds for the programme in 2008-09 and expects to have supported just over 4000 projects. The Reconnect programme is currently being evaluated against its objectives and decisions in respect of any further grant support for domestic microgeneration will be taken in light of the recommendations of that evaluation which is expected to be completed by December 2008.

As regards possible support for renewable heat, the Department for Business, Enterprise and Regulatory Reform (BERR) has issued a consultation document with proposals for a UK Renewable Energy Strategy to address forthcoming EU targets. This document notes that the heat market in the UK is complex and relatively undeveloped. The consultation document sets out policy and legislative proposals to develop a renewable heat market, including possible incentive mechanisms. DETI is working with BERR on this and has arranged for BERR to speak at a Renewable Heat Seminar in Belfast in September to consider how best to develop the renewable heat market to meet Northern Ireland's specific needs.'

**The DSD response states:** 'DSD are aware of the environmental and financial advantages of using renewable technologies. DSD is co-funding a £550,000 pilot with Northern Ireland Electricity to test a number of renewable technologies, mostly in Hard to Treat rural areas. The range of technologies being tested includes solar water heating, wood pellet boilers, biomass room heaters, solar photovoltaics and solid wall insulation. The aim of this pilot is to help identify whether such

technologies are a viable, cost-effective alternative to oil or gas heating in the longer term within the Warm Homes Scheme.'

### **Anaerobic Digestion**

#### **Recommendation j:**

The Committee recommends continued and, where necessary, enhanced support for research on farm-scale anaerobic digestion (AD) trials. In addition, DARD and DOE should explore whether the use of AD could be used as support for a case to extending derogation on the Nitrates Directive and as a positive means of achieving compliance with the Directive.

**The DARD response:** states: 'Research into renewable technologies at AFBI is ongoing by way of the Renewables Research Programme, following a successful bid to the Chancellors Innovation Fund. DARD endorse the Committee's recommendation that as part of this dedicated programme, research continues into on farm scale anaerobic digestion at the recently commissioned Renewable Energy Centre of Excellence at AFBI.

There is potential to enhance existing research proposals to support further work on nutrient removal from digestate from anaerobic digesters.

In relation to anaerobic digestion being used as a case to extend derogation on the Nitrates Directive and achieving compliance with the Directive, on farm anaerobic digestion is of little relevance at present as the digestate remains nutrient rich and is subject to the same constraints as the manure itself.'

### **Strategic Support**

#### **Recommendation k:**

**DARD should establish a (virtual) Centre of Renewable Energy Excellence to capture the benefits of the work being undertaken in NI and to introduce the**

**best practice within a rural context. This would also include a non-food crops centre for NI to link research to production and on to market.**

**The DARD response: states:** 'DARD have demonstrated commitment to the development of the renewable energy sector within the rural context. DARD has specifically focused on research and technology transfer activities by supporting the establishment of an Environment and Renewable Energy Centre of Excellence at the Hillsborough site of the Agricultural and Food Biosciences Institute.

In addition, the training and demonstration technologies carried out at the College of Agriculture and Rural Development, further demonstrates DARD's commitment in supporting the uptake of renewable energy technologies.

Both, AFBI and CAFRE have well established links with many other relevant organisations across the renewable energy sector, including other research establishments, universities, and business agencies within Northern Ireland and further afield. Funding for activities carried out by the National Non Food Crop Centre encompasses Northern Ireland. At this stage, it is considered that duplication of effort may occur if another organisation was to be established.

The Agricultural Stakeholder Forum on Renewable Energy will consider appropriate strategic support mechanisms for the rural community as part of the work of their review of the DARD Renewable Energy Action Plan.'

### **Cross-departmental Monitoring**

#### **Recommendation I:**

**The cross-Departmental group on bio-energy, led by DETI, should report on a quarterly basis on its progress and that of the Executive in making progress towards its targets on the adoption of renewable energy. The Executive may also wish to consider establishing an external monitoring group, like the NI Biodiversity Group, to monitor progress.**

**The DETI response states:** 'As noted above, the outcomes of the cross-departmental study on bio-energy are being considered and, as was communicated to stakeholders at a seminar in February 2008 as part of the study, these will form the basis of an action plan to be developed and consulted on in 2008-09. While ongoing work to the benefit of bio-energy sector has continued eg the revisions to the NIRO and the implementation of the Energy from Waste projects, it would not have been appropriate to undertake other more specific actions in advance of the results of the study.'

As the cross-departmental bio-energy action plan is being developed, consideration will be given to the setting of targets and the most appropriate reporting, monitoring and evaluation regime and the Committee's recommendations will be borne in mind. DETI already reports in its Operating Plan on annual progress towards Northern Ireland's renewable electricity targets as part of the DOE led PSA 22 ( Protecting our Environment and Reducing our Carbon Footprint ).'

### **Additional Recommendations**

#### **Recommendation m:**

**A key objective for DARD should be to increase the exploitation of RE opportunities.**

**The DARD response states:** 'DARD continues to take an informed and balanced approach to supporting the exploitation of renewable energy opportunities for the rural community

DARD's current review of the DARD Renewable Energy Action Plan will consider the business opportunities for the rural community.

The Department will continue to work with other government departments to ensure that the interests of the agricultural stakeholder are given due consideration.'

#### **Recommendation n:**

**Northern Ireland has enormous potential to participate in the RE Sector, especially by the agricultural industry. This potential should be exploited.**

**The OFMDFM response states:** 'We recognize that much valuable work has, and continues to be done, in researching and developing renewable energy technologies. It is important that advances are made to bring new products and solutions to the market. We recognize the challenges that face your Department as it continues to work closely with other Departments, and industry partners, to co-ordinate actions which optimize the conditions for this to occur. The opportunities afforded by the recent establishment of the Northern Ireland Task Force (NITF) may help in this regard.'

**The DRD response states:** 'DRD is responsible for the Regional Development Strategy (RDS) and the Regional Transportation Strategy (RTS). The issue of renewable energy is relevant to both as they are based on the principles of sustainable development. Both Strategies are the subject of review which will consider sustainable development and issues including renewable energy.

The former sets out the strategy for the spatial development of the region with guidelines covering the main themes. These guidelines include the need to maintain a working countryside and the development of renewable energy sources. The RDS also promotes a wider choice of energy supply including the use of renewable energy sources.

The RTS aims to change behaviours in that we are seeking to promote public transport, cycling and walking rather than the private car thereby reducing greenhouse gas emissions and congestion. The Strategy review will consider a range of issues including sustainable development. Renewable energy is an element likely to feature in the context of encouraging people to use public transport and other sustainable modes rather than the car.

With regard to current measures, from April of this year following extensive trials in 2007, Translink, the major provider of public transport services, has operated its entire bus fleet using a blend of 5% bio-fuel and 95% ultra low sulphur diesel. Translink continue to closely monitor the future availability and sustainability of alternative blends of bio-fuel and diesel in conjunction with normal commercial considerations in the formulation of its fuel policy. They are also currently considering a pilot scheme to establish the costs and benefits on the use of



Environmentally Enhanced Vehicles within their fleet subject to a satisfactory economic appraisal being accepted by the Department.

DRD is considering a rapid transit network for Belfast. Part of that consideration is the use of hybrid vehicles (diesel / electric or gas powered) which will result in low emissions and maximum fuel efficiency. This is a developing area where renewable energy is likely to gain more prominence.'

**Recommendation o:**

**There should be a review of the Northern Ireland energy strategy, including a legal regime for heat.**

**The DETI response states:** 'The Strategic Energy Framework (SEF) was published by DETI in 2004 as Government's energy vision for the next decade. Given the range of international, national and local issues impacting on energy in recent times, DETI decided earlier this year to review the SEF during 2008-9. A revised and refreshed SEF, which will be issued for public consultation in the Autumn, will review progress to date and will set out DETI's proposals to continue the development and strengthening of Northern Ireland's energy market. An integral and much enhanced part of the revised SEF will be around actions to develop renewable energy, which will include research into the policy and legislation for a renewable heat market in Northern Ireland.'

**Recommendation p:**

**Short Rotation Coppice (SRC) is a very effective crop for bio-remediation, which also makes its production economically attractive. DARD and other relevant Executive departments should develop the mechanisms to deliver planned production.**

**The DARD response states:** 'The science and economics of bio-remediation using short rotation coppice (SRC) willow forms part of the DARD Renewables Research Programme. CAFRE, in conjunction with AFBI, provide information, through technology transfer activities to interested members of the agricultural sector.'

Forestry Service, through the NIRDP, support the establishment of SRC Willow and also provide market information relating to SRC willow production.'

**Recommendation q:**

**Northern Ireland Building regulations should be revised to promote the use of renewable energy technologies in all buildings;**

**The DFP response states:** 'One of the recommendations of the Report is that building regulations be revised to promote the use of renewable energy technologies in all buildings.

When DFP submitted written evidence to the DARD Committee it advised that the last amendment to the Building Regulations (NI) 2000, made in 2006, set onerous targets that encourage the use of renewable technologies. The national methodologies that are utilised to determine compliance with the requirements fully facilitate the installation of renewables. Since submitting the evidence, DFP officials have started work on a further amendment that will reduce carbon emissions from new buildings by a further 25% by 2010, rising to 44% by 2013.

It is advised that building regulations do not address all buildings as they cannot be applied retrospectively to existing stock.'

***'DFP would take this opportunity to clarify and to correct some inaccuracies in the evidence regarding the Building Regulations presented to the Committee from the Sustainable Energy Association. These points are listed in the DFP response (attachment 2) together with clarification of the actual position.'***

**The DOE response states:** 'As part of government efforts to promote renewable energy and carbon efficiency, draft PPS 18 seeks to encourage the greater integration of renewable energy technologies, both in the design of new buildings and through the retro fitting of such technologies to existing buildings. For many buildings this will mean increased consideration of the benefits of small-scale renewable energy technologies (often referred to as 'microgeneration'). In addition it will entail greater consideration of complementary measures in the design of new buildings, such as the application of Passive Solar Design principles, to help achieve energy gains making the most of free energy and light from the sun.'

**The DSD response states:** ' In addition DSD will deliver an eco-village in Northern Ireland, introducing a new ethos in the design process, setting new standards of construction and bring benefits to the environment and residents alike.'

**Recommendation r:**

**Planning Service needs to be more facilitative of small scale planning renewable energy technologies**

**The DOE response states:** 'Renewable energy developments are assessed against current published policy as set out in policy PSU12 of the Planning Strategy for Northern Ireland.

The Department of the Environment has recently consulted on draft Planning Policy Statement 18 (PPS18) which, sets out updated planning policy for proposals to develop renewable sources of energy development. The primary aim of draft PPS 18 is to encourage and facilitate the provision and siting of renewable energy generating facilities in appropriate locations within the built and natural environment whilst assisting the diversification of energy supply and a more competitive energy market, and to encourage economic growth and rural diversification associated with the development of an indigenous renewable energy industry.

Bespoke information and guidance on each of the recognised renewable energy technologies is set out in a technical annex to draft PPS18.

Some forms of micro generation development currently benefitted from permitted development rights under the planning (General Development) Order (Northern Ireland) 1993 and therefore do not require an application for planning permission.

These existing permitted development rights mostly date back to before the 1990s and were not designed to facilitate micro-generation development. Consequently the Departments Planning Service has consulted on a review of existing householder permitted development rights and overall is seeking to provide a simplified regulatory regime for micro-generation development that will facilitate such development. The Department has also initiated work on extending similar permitted development rights to non-domestic land uses.

Planning Service through its Divisional Planning Offices has granted planning permission for in excess of 300 single stand alone wind turbine developments across the region.

Planning Service Headquarters has set up a team to deal exclusively with applications for windfarms, thus ensuring a consistent and streamlined response to all wind farm applications. In addition Planning Service is exploring changes to procedures which would involve more extensive pre application discussions, enhanced development management guidance to provide greater clarity/certainty for applicants, and a streamlined consultation process.

To date there have been 31 planning permissions for windfarms incorporating some 272 turbines with a generating capacity of over 400MW. There are a further 47 windfarm applications in the system. These propose an additional 472 turbines with a total capacity of some 1213MW. The total number of wind turbines proposed and extant equals 744 with a potential generating capacity of 1613MW. To date only one application has been refused planning permission. A further 3 applications have been withdrawn by the developers.'

**Recommendation s:**

**Energy as a legitimate concern of many Assembly Committees and should not be reserved by the ETI Committee**

**The DETI response states:** 'In June 2008, a group of MLAs drawn from the different NI political parties and Assembly Committees formed the Assembly Group on Energy. Its purpose is to provide a platform for MLAs to debate and receive information in relation to energy issues affecting Northern Ireland.

Given that a number of Departments can make a contribution to the identification of opportunities and actions to address barriers to the successful development of sustainable energy, the DETI Minister will shortly be proposing to the Executive that she should chair an Inter-departmental Working Group to ensure effective co-ordination across Departments.'

Attachment 1: Table of Departmental Responses Received to ARD Committee Report on Renewable Energy and Alternative Land Use

Annex 2

Attachment 2: Departmental Written Responses

### Responses Received to ARD Committee Report on Renewable Energy and Alternative Land Use



Department of Agriculture & Rural Development	Yes	
Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister	Yes	
Department of Regional Development	Yes	
Department of Employment and Learning	Yes	
Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety	Yes	Responded with Nil.
Department of Environment	Yes	
Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment	Yes	
Department of Education	Yes	
Department of Social Development	Yes	
Department of Culture Arts and Leisure	Yes	Responded directly to ARD Committee Chair
Department of Finance and Personnel	Yes	

**Departmental Written Responses**

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