



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Committee for the Economy

Minutes of Proceedings

Wednesday 3 December 2025

Meeting Location: Room 30, Parliament Buildings

Present: Mr Phillip Brett MLA (Chairperson)

Ms Diana Armstrong MLA

Mr Jonathan Buckley MLA

Mr David Honeyford MLA

Ms Kate Nicholl MLA

Present by video-conferencing:

Mr Gary Middleton MLA (Deputy Chairperson)

Mr Pádraig Delargy MLA

Miss Jemma Dolan MLA

Ms Sinéad McLaughlin MLA

Apologies: None

In Attendance: Peter McCallion (Assembly Clerk)

Katie McMaster (Assistant Assembly Clerk)

Karen O'Hare (Clerical Supervisor)

Kyle Lawlor (Clerical Officer)

The meeting commenced in public session at 10:01am.

1. Apologies

There were no apologies.

2. Declarations of Interest

Padraig Delargy declared an interest in respect of being a former participant in the Go Succeed programme.

Kate Nicholl joined the meeting at 10:02am

3. Chairperson's Business

3.1 Growth Mission / Local Growth Fund Bids

The Chairperson reminded Members that the Committee had written to the Department for the Economy seeking further information on its bids to the UK Government's Growth Mission Fund. It is understood that this Shared Prosperity Fund replacement may now be retitled as the Local Growth Fund.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department of Finance seeking clarity on relevant bids to the Growth Mission Fund and/or the Local Growth Fund.

4. Draft Minutes

Agreed: The Committee agreed the minutes of the Economy Committee meeting of 26 November 2025.

5. Matters Arising

Jonathan Buckley recorded his appreciation for the Committee's letter of congratulations following the birth of his daughter.

6. Invest NI – evidence session

The following officials joined the meeting at 10:03am:

- Kieran Donoghue, Chief Executive Officer, Invest NI;
- Anne Beggs, Chief Commercial Officer, Invest NI;
- Kathryn Hill, Chief Operating Officer, Invest NI; and
- Mark Lee, Acting Head of Economic Policy, DfE.

The evidence session was reported by Hansard.

Key issues discussed included: Invest NI's review of investments report, the development of an ethical investment framework by DfE, trading with the State of Israel, supply chain issues, guidance on trading with nations accused of genocide, development of an international relations strategy; Windsor Framework challenges, the establishment of a dual market access stakeholder forum, Foreign Direct Investment, exports and cross-border co-operation; Research and Development investments; regional balance and support for the North West and South West; infrastructural challenges; strong broadband connectivity; regional property portfolio and associated budget constraints; sustainability targets; the Invest NI restructure; AI, skills and cyber security; inheritance tax and the agri-food sector; and the Good Jobs Employment Bill.

The Chairperson thanked the officials for their evidence.
The officials left the meeting at 11:42am.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department and Invest NI seeking:

- data on NI's trade with the State of Israel;
- an update on the development of guidance on trading with nations accused of genocide; and
- an update on the development of the ethical investment framework.

Agreed: The Committee also agreed to write to the Department and Invest NI seeking:

- data on new investors and support for investment showing: the value of the investments, the jobs created and the associated likely wage levels; the support provided and the investment likely to be leveraged, by local government district;
- data on FDI visits converted into investments, by local government district;
- a breakdown in respect of new investors and the support for investment showing: jobs generated in manufacturing and jobs generated in services; and
- further information on the Windsor Framework stakeholder forum including its Terms of Reference, its membership, its work-to-date and its work programme.

Agreed: The Committee also agreed to write to Invest NI suggesting that it undertakes an economic and employment impact assessment of the anticipated Good Jobs Employment Bill and seeking sight of that assessment when available.

Proceedings were suspended at 11:46am.

Proceedings resumed at 11:55am.

7. Renewable Heat Association (RHANI) and Ulster Farmers' Union (UFU) – Committee Stage of the RHI (Closure of Non-Domestic Scheme) Bill – evidence session

The following witnesses joined the meeting at 11:55am:

- Alan Hegan, Director, Renewable Heat Association Limited;
- John McLenaghan, Deputy President, Ulster Farmers' Union; and
- Denzil Cluff, Managing Director, Ecoerne Consulting

Key issues discussed included: the powers of the Bill as introduced; DfE's capacity to inspect and audit the RHI closure scheme; metering; banding; the usefulness of the 2017-19 historic data; other models of inspection; bureaucracy; the need for a good level of Departmental communication with participants and associations; Ofgem issues; relocation and transfer/repurposing issues and the need for an appeals process; one-off payment options; and climate change targets and green skills.

David Honeyford left the meeting at 12:27pm.

Kate Nicholl left the meeting at 12:29pm.

Jonathan Buckley left the meeting at 12:41pm.

The Chairperson thanked the witnesses for their evidence.

The witnesses left the meeting at 12.55pm.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to commission Assembly Research to provide information on the SEAI model in RoI, in respect of inspection, audit and metering options.

Agreed: The Committee also agreed to write to the Department seeking sight of the responses to the consultation in respect of the RHI closure regulations.

8. Correspondence

8.1 Index

Noted: The Committee noted an index of incoming correspondence

8.2 2025-26 December Monitoring

Noted: The Committee noted a Departmental briefing paper in respect of the December Monitoring Round, pending the Departmental evidence session in January 2026.

8.3 Grid Connection Cost Policy

Noted: The Committee noted Departmental correspondence in respect of the grid connection cost policy decision, including socialisation of costs, pending the Departmental evidence session in January 2026.

8.4 Net Zero Accelerator Fund

Noted: The Committee noted a Departmental response in respect of the Net Zero Accelerator Fund.

8.5 Delegated Legislation Scrutiny

Noted: The Committee noted correspondence in respect of the revised Assembly process for delegated legislation scrutiny.

8.6 Windsor Framework

Noted: The Committee noted a copy of the Windsor Framework Democratic Scrutiny Committee response to the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, in respect of Lord Murphy's report on the Windsor Framework.

8.7 NextEnergy Capital

The Committee considered a copy of correspondence from NextEnergy Capital in respect of a reported UK Government proposal to shift inflation-linked payments under the Renewables Obligation (RO) and Feed-in Tariff (FiT) schemes from RPI to CPI.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to forward the correspondence to the Department for comment.

8.8 Financial Outturn and Forecast

Noted: The Committee noted correspondence from the Committee for Finance in respect of the latest financial outturn and forecast.

8.9 Arms Length Bodies

Noted: The Committee noted correspondence from the Committee for Finance providing further information on the review of Arms Length Bodies.

8.10 Report of the Examiner of Statutory Rules

Noted: The Committee noted the 51st report of the Examiner of Statutory Rules, including the Draft SR: The Renewable Heat Incentive Scheme (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2025 on which the ESR had no comment.

8.11 Security of Electricity Supply

The Committee considered a response from the Utility Regulator in respect of security of electricity supply and related Ministerial correspondence offering an informal briefing with the Chairperson on the issue.

Noted: The Committee noted the response from the Utility Regulator.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that the Chairperson should meet with officials informally in respect of the security of supply issue.

8.12 Youth Action NI Summary Report

Noted: The Committee noted correspondence from Youth Action NI providing a copy of its summary report on young peoples' lived experience of economic inactivity.

8.13 The Secret Bookshop

The Committee considered an invitation from Cahoots NI, inviting Members to attend The Secret Bookshop in Cityside Retail Park.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that Members would advise individually if they are able to attend, diaries permitting.

8.14 Mines Royal

Noted: The Committee noted a copy of correspondence from a concerned individual to the Crown Estate, in respect of Mines Royal and environmental concerns.

9. Forward Work Programme

The Committee considered its forward work programme.

Agreed: The Committee agreed its forward work programme, as drafted.

10. Any Other Business

There was no other business.

11. Date, Time and Place of the next meeting

The next Economy Committee meeting is scheduled to begin on Wednesday 10 December 2025 at 10:00am in Room 30, Parliament Buildings, Stormont.

The Committee meeting was adjourned at 12:56pm.

Gary Middleton MLA

Deputy Chairperson, Committee for the Economy

10 December 2025