



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Joint Concurrent Committee meeting of the Committee for the Economy and the Committee for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs

Minutes of Proceedings

Wednesday 5th March 2025

Meeting Location: The Senate Chamber, Parliament Buildings, Stormont.

Present:

Mr Phillip Brett MLA (Chairperson)

Mr Robbie Butler MLA (Deputy Chairperson)

Ms Diana Armstrong MLA

Mr John Blair MLA

Mr Jonathan Buckley MLA

Mr David Honeyford MLA

Mr Declan McAleer MLA

Mr Patsy McGlone MLA

Ms Emma Sheerin MLA

Present via video conferencing:

Mr Pádraig Delargy MLA

Mr William Irwin MLA

Apologies:

Mr Gary Middleton MLA

Ms Aine Murphy MLA

Ms Sinéad McLaughlin MLA

Ms Kate Nicholl MLA

In Attendance:

Peter McCallion (Assembly Clerk)

Janice Thompson (Assembly Clerk)

Anthea Matthews (Assistant Assembly Clerk)

Karen O'Hare (Clerical Supervisor)

Stuart Gilmour (Clerical Officer)

The meeting commenced in public session at 12:21pm.

1. Apologies

Apologies were as indicated above.

2. Declarations of Interest

Phillip Brett declared an interest in that he had met with Fibrus Networks Ltd on a party basis.

Dianna Armstrong declared an interest in that she is a Fibrus Networks Ltd customer.

Emma Sheerin declared an interest in that her mother is a Fibrus Networks Ltd customer.

3. Chairperson's Business

There was no Chairperson's Business.

4. Fibrus Networks Ltd - Response to Storm Éowyn – oral evidence session

The following witnesses joined the meeting at 12:21pm:

- Jenny Lennon, Managing Director, Networks, Fibrus Networks Ltd;
- Dominic Kearns, Founder and CEO, Fibrus Networks Ltd; and
- Shane Haslem, Chief Operating Officer, Fibrus Networks Ltd

Key issues discussed included: customers loss of service; good will compensation payments; overhead cabling vulnerabilities and the high cost of underground cabling; the £5m cost of Storm Éowyn and the absorption of those costs by Fibrus Networks Ltd; the post incident report; communication arrangements and problems; the limitation of alternative technologies owing to limited mobile data coverage; the development of a vulnerable customers register; Openreach/NIE dependencies; the role of the Electronic Communication Regional Response Group; the need for formalisation of back-up relationships; the absence of an Openreach Service Level Agreement (SLA); and the Ofcom automatic compensation scheme.

John Blair left the meeting at 1:18pm

The Committee for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs (CAERA) lost its decision-making quorum

The Chairperson thanked the witnesses for their evidence.

The witnesses left the meeting at 1.23pm.

5. Any Other Business

Agreed: The Economy Committee agreed to invite CAERA to a further joint concurrent evidence session with DfE and DAERA officials in respect of the provision of telecommunications access for domestic and business customers in rural and urban areas; the development of storm protection measures; the limitation of alternative technologies; the need for formalised back-up arrangements with sub-contractors; the absence

of an Openreach SLA; and the implications for future broadband and other related procurement.

6. Date, Time and Place of Next Meeting

The date, time and place of the next joint concurrent meeting is to be determined.

The meeting was adjourned at 1:24pm.

Phillip Brett MLA

Chairperson, Committee for the Economy

12 March 2025

Robbie Butler MLA

Chairperson, Committee for

**Agriculture, Environment
and Rural Affairs**

13 March 2025