



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Committee for the Economy

Minutes of Proceedings

Wednesday 18th June 2025

Meeting Location: Room 30, Parliament Buildings, Stormont

Present: Mr Phillip Brett MLA (Chairperson)

Ms Diana Armstrong MLA

Mr David Honeyford MLA

Ms Emma Sheerin MLA

Present by video-conferencing:

Mr Jonathan Buckley MLA

Mr Pádraig Delargy MLA

Ms Sinéad McLaughlin MLA

Apologies: Mr Gary Middleton MLA (Deputy Chairperson)

Ms Kate Nicholl MLA

In Attendance: Peter McCallion (Assembly Clerk)

Katie McMaster (Assistant Assembly Clerk)

Karen O'Hare (Clerical Supervisor)

Stuart Gilmour (Clerical Officer)

Aidan Stennett (Research Officer) – item 7 only

The meeting commenced in public session at 10:00am.

1. Apologies

Apologies were as indicated above.

2. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest

3. Chairperson's Business

3.1 Informal Meeting – Minister's statement

The Chairperson advised Members that, as is usual, he had met with the Minister informally on Monday 16 June 2025 in order to discuss her statement on post-school Special Educational Needs.

Noted: The Committee noted that a summary note of the informal meeting had been circulated.

3.2 Review of Mineral Licensing

The Chairperson advised Members that in AQW 27392, reference was made to a review of mineral licensing and that owing to the length of time it will take to complete the review of the legislative framework, a moratorium on mineral prospecting licensing would not be legal.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department seeking clarity as well as the timescale and further information on the terms of reference of the review.

3.3 Support for Childcare Providers

The Chairperson advised Members that in AQW 27332, reference was made to the draft final research report on targeted business support for childcare providers.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department seeking sight of the report and clarity on the way forward.

4. Draft Minutes

Agreed: The Committee agreed the minutes of the Economy Committee meeting of 11 June 2025.

5. Matters Arising

There were no matters arising.

6. Skills Barometer Report - evidence session

The following witnesses joined the meeting at 10:02am:

- Gareth Hetherington, Director, Economic Policy Centre, Ulster University; and
- Mark Magill, Principal Economist, Economic Policy Centre, Ulster University.

Key issues discussed included: labour and skills shortages in Northern Ireland; lifelong learning including models in other jurisdictions; economic inactivity; the 14-19 framework; streamlining and simplifying the vocational education pathway; the need

for independent careers advice and the development of the careers portal; AI uncertainty in respect of the impact on employment; the role of FE colleges in providing sub-degree qualifications; sectoral partnerships for apprenticeships and traineeships; transversal skills; curriculum issues; changes to the working age population changes in NI; migration; the economic impact of international students; inclusivity; institutional agility; and NI/Rol and East/West student mobility.

The Chairperson thanked the witnesses for their evidence.

The witnesses left the meeting at 11:09am.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to seek further evidence from UU EPC on its NI sub-regional skills barometer, when it is produced later in 2025.

7. Assembly Research briefing – Renewable Electricity Overview

Aidan Stennett joined the meeting at 11:10am.

Key issues discussed included: the barriers facing renewable development; the need for a support scheme; the achievement of climate change targets; the need for an overarching renewable development plan; and the role of Great British Energy.

The Chairperson thanked Aidan for his briefing.

Aidan left the meeting at 11:22am.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department for Infrastructure seeking an update on the outcome of the consultation on the review of regional planning policy on renewable and low carbon energy.

Agreed: The Committee also agreed to write to the Department in respect of the overall plan for the development of renewables including long-term storage; grid connection and the role of Great British Energy following the Chancellor's recent statement on infrastructure spending.

Agreed: The Committee also agreed to commission a further Assembly Research paper comparing the NI renewables development position with other jurisdictions and identifying actions.

8. Insolvency (Amendment) Bill Pre 2nd Stage – evidence session

The following official joined the meeting at 11:25am:

- Jack Reid, Insolvency Team, DfE

The evidence session was reported by Hansard.

Jonathan Buckley left the meeting at 11:25am.

Key issues discussed included: NI specific aspects of the legislation; confirmation that issues discussed in the consultation were included within the Bill and confirmation that issues included within the Bill were subject to consultation.

The Chairperson thanked the official for his evidence.

The official left the meeting at 11:46am.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department, once the Bill is introduced, seeking: the Keeling Schedule; the Equality Impact Assessment or screening document; and the Delegated Powers Memorandum.

9. Correspondence

9.1 Index

Noted: The Committee noted an index of incoming correspondence.

9.2 PRaM Bill Scheduling

Noted: The Committee noted Ministerial correspondence in respect of the UKG's scheduling of the passage of the Product Regulation and Metrology (PRaM) Bill and the impact on the legislative consent process.

9.3 PRaM Bill - updated LCM

Noted: The Committee noted the updated legislative consent memorandum on the PRaM Bill – the related motion was debated on 16 June 2025.

9.4 Department's June Monitoring Round

Noted: The Committee noted the Department's June Monitoring Round submission in line with Section 13 of the Functioning of Government (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act (NI) 2021.

9.5 NI Protocol / Windsor Framework Costs

Noted: The Committee noted a response from the Department showing a breakdown of Treasury earmarked costs in respect of the Northern Ireland Protocol and Windsor Framework.

9.6 Fort George

Noted: The Committee noted a response from the Department in respect of the development of Fort George.

9.7 UK ENIC Costs

Noted: The Committee noted a response from the Department in respect of the legislative consent motion for the Border Security, Asylum and

Immigration Bill and setting out the annual subscription charge for the Department's UK ENIC access.

9.8 CJI's Report

Noted: The Committee noted the Criminal Justice Inspection (CJI's) Northern Ireland's report on offence investigation, including the Department's arm's length bodies including Tourism NI, Trading Standards and HSE NI.

9.9 Riverside Theatre Coleraine

Noted: The Committee noted correspondence from a concerned individual in respect of the closure of the Riverside Theatre in Coleraine.

9.10 Post-19 SEN

The Committee considered forwarded correspondence from a concerned individual in respect of post-19 SEN.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the concerned individual referring to the Minister's recent statement on post-school SEN.

9.11 Careers Action Plan

The Committee considered a tabled copy of the Careers Action Plan.

Agreed: The Committee to seek an oral evidence session on the Careers Action Plan.

10. Forward Work Programme

The Committee considered its forward work programme including a further Assembly Research briefing on credit unions.

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

11. Any Other Business

There was no other business.

12. Date, Time and Place of Next Meeting

The next Economy Committee meeting is scheduled to begin on Wednesday 25 June 2025 at 10:00am in Foyle Port.

The Committee meeting was adjourned at 11:48am.

Phillip Brett MLA

Chairperson, Committee for the Economy

25 June 2025