



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Committee for the Economy

Minutes of Proceedings

Wednesday 15 October 2025

Meeting Location: Room 30, Parliament Buildings

Present:

Mr Phillip Brett MLA (Chairperson)

Mr Gary Middleton MLA (Deputy Chairperson)

Mr David Honeyford MLA

Ms Kate Nicholl MLA

Present by video-conferencing:

Ms Diana Armstrong MLA

Mr Pádraig Delargy MLA

Ms Sinéad McLaughlin MLA

Apologies:

Mr Jonathan Buckley MLA

Ms Emma Sheerin MLA

In Attendance:

Peter McCallion (Assembly Clerk)

Katie McMaster (Assistant Assembly Clerk)

Karen O'Hare (Clerical Supervisor)

Kyle Lawlor (Clerical Officer)

Aidan Stennett (Research Officer) – Item 12 only

Aoibheann Baker (Bill Office Clerk) – Item 13 only

The meeting commenced in public session at 9:30am.

1. Apologies

Apologies were as indicated above.

2. Declarations of Interest

David Honeyford declared an interest in respect of his daughter having a student loan.

3. Chairperson's Business

3.1 Net Zero Accelerator Fund

The Chairperson reminded Members that in response to AQW 32606, the Minister had advised of a report on the need for a Net Zero Accelerator Fund.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department seeking sight of the Net Zero Accelerator Fund report.

3.2 Energy Policy

The Chairperson reminded Members that in response to written questions, the Minister had referred to 2 consultations – on the grid connections policy framework and on low carbon heating in residential buildings - which were launched in January 2025 and about which no feedback has been provided.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department seeking sight of the feedback on the consultations on the grid connections policy framework and low carbon heating in residential buildings.

4. Draft Minutes

Agreed: The Committee agreed the minutes of the Economy Committee meeting of 8 October 2025.

5. Matters Arising

There were no matters arising.

6. Insolvency (Amendment) Bill – The Law Society of Northern Ireland

The following witnesses joined the meeting at 9:31am:

- Claire McNamee, Conveyancing and Non-Contentious Business Lead, Law Society NI;
- Richard Craig, Partner, Mills Selig and Non-Contentious Business Committee Member, Law Society NI; and
- Maria Glover, Director, Napier Solicitors, Member, Law Society NI.

The evidence session was reported by Hansard.

Key issues discussed included: the use of preliminary inquiry questionnaires; issues relating to digital exclusion; and the need for training for insolvency practitioners and sign-posting for creditors.

The Chairperson thanked the witnesses for their evidence.

The witnesses left the meeting at 9:43am.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to revise the order of its agenda.

7. Delegated Legislation - The Insolvency Practitioner Regulations SL1

The Committee considered the proposed statutory rule: The Insolvency Practitioner (Amendment and Transitional Provisions) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2025

Agreed: The Committee agreed that it was content for the Department to make the rule.

8. Delegated Legislation - Chemicals and Genetically Modified Organisms SL1

The Committee considered the proposed statutory rule: The Chemicals (Health and Safety) and Genetically Modified Organism (Contained Use) (Amendment) (EU Exit) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2025.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to defer consideration of the statutory rule and seek clarity from the Department as to whether Executive approval had been secured for the rule.

9. Delegated Legislation - RHI Uplift Tariffs SL1

The Committee considered the proposed statutory rule: The Renewable Heat Incentive Scheme (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2025

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department seeking clarity on the timeline for Executive approval and confirming that HM Treasury had agreed to provide AME support for the additional costs.

10. SR 2025/164 Student Fees

The Committee considered the statutory rule: SR 2025/164 The Student Fees (Amounts) Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2025 and agreed the following motion:

Agreed: “That the Committee for the Economy has considered the statutory rule: SR 2025/164 The Student Fees (Amounts) Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2025 and subject to the report of the Examiner of Statutory Rules, has no objection to the rule”

11. Correspondence

11.1 Index

Noted: The Committee noted an index of incoming correspondence.

11.2 AI and the NI Economy

Noted: The Committee noted a Ministerial response in respect of Artificial Intelligence and the implications for the NI economy.

Pádraig Delargy joined the meeting at 9:51am.

11.3 Innovation, Science and AI

The Committee considered a Departmental response in respect of support for innovation, science and AI and including a copy of the Matrix report on AI.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to schedule an oral and written evidence session with Matrix on its report on Artificial Intelligence in NI.

11.4 Advanced Manufacturing Innovation Centre

The Committee considered a Departmental response in respect of the Advanced Manufacturing Innovation Centre and the functions typically associated with a Catapult. The response also referred to Invest NI employment targets for supported companies.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to forward the correspondence to the ADS Group, for its information.

11.5 Invest NI Resignation

The Committee considered a Ministerial response and a response from the Invest NI CEO in respect of an Invest NI Board member resignation and regional development issues.

Noted: The Committee noted the correspondence, pending the Invest NI evidence session, scheduled for December.

11.6 Progress of LEPs

Noted: The Committee noted a Departmental response in respect of the establishment and progress of Local Economic Partnerships – all of which are developing actions and the funding for which is to be re-profiled over 2 years.

11.7 Rol Student Enrolments

The Committee considered a Departmental response in respect of Rol student enrolments in NI and the Minister's recent meeting with her Rol counterparts.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Minister seeking clarity on the objectives of the Minister's engagement with her counterparts in Rol.

11.8 Rol Students: MaSN Cap

Noted: The Committee noted a Departmental response in respect of Rol students and the MaSN Cap indicating that the increase in the cap has been at least matched by the increase in Rol students studying in NI.

11.9 Post-school SEN

Noted: The Committee noted a Departmental response advising of a post-school SEN transformation bid in respect of place-based transition arrangements.

11.10 Sustainable Aviation Fuel

Noted: The Committee noted a Ministerial response welcoming the Committee's endorsement of the LCM for the Sustainable Aviation Fuel Bill.

11.11 Scottish Qualifications Body

Noted: The Committee noted Ministerial correspondence providing notice of minor amendments to delegated legislation in NI owing to a change in the name of the Scottish qualifications body.

11.12 Visitor/Tourist Accommodation

The Committee considered Departmental correspondence in respect of the launch of a public consultation on proposed changes to the certification of visitor/tourist accommodation in NI.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to schedule a Departmental oral and written evidence session on the feedback to the consultation.

Agreed: The Committee also agreed to seek sight of the research which the Department has commissioned into the impact of short-term holiday lets on the housing market.

11.13 ITE Bursary

Noted: The Committee noted correspondence from the Minister for Education in respect of the Initial Teacher Education Bursary Scheme.

11.14 Windsor Framework Evidence

Noted: The Committee noted correspondence from the Windsor Framework Democratic Scrutiny Committee on its evidence session with FSB NI on the Windsor Framework.

11.15 PfG/Budget Alignment

Noted: The Committee noted correspondence from the Committee for Finance providing a copy of the PfG/Budget alignment document produced by the Department of Finance.

11.16 Go Succeed

The Committee considered a request from East Belfast Enterprise to meet with the Chairperson informally to discuss concerns around the current Go Succeed programme and the new Local Growth Fund.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that it was content for the Chairperson to meet informally with East Belfast Enterprise, diary permitting.

11.17 Caleb's Cause

The Committee considered an invitation from Caleb's Cause to Members to attend an event being held in the Long Gallery on Monday 17 November 2025, 5-8pm.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that Members would advise Caleb's Cause individually, if they are able to attend.

11.18 Act Now

The Committee considered correspondence from Act Now, submitting its research report 'Invest MI, F-35s and Israel; Public Money for War Crimes.'

Noted: The Committee noted the correspondence from Act Now.

11.19 Concerned Individual

Noted: The Committee noted further correspondence from a concerned individual in respect of wayleave payments from NIE.

12. Assembly Briefing – Insolvency (Amendment) Bill

Aidan Stennett joined the meeting at 9:57am.

Aidan briefed the Committee on his paper on the Insolvency (Amendment) Bill.

Kate Nicholl joined the meeting at 10:01am.

The Chairperson thanked Aidan for his briefing.

Aidan left the meeting at 10:03am.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to continue proceedings in closed session at 10:03am.

13. Insolvency (Amendment) Bill – Bill Office guidance

Aoibheann Baker joined the meeting at 10:03am.

Aoibheann briefed the Committee on the next phases of the Committee Stage of the Insolvency (Amendment) Bill.

The Chairperson thanked Aoibheann for her briefing.

Aoibheann Baker left the meeting at 10:19am.

Proceedings continued in public session from 10:20am.

14. Insolvency (Amendment) Bill – The Bar of Northern Ireland

The following witness joined the meeting at 10:20am

- William Gowdy KC, The Bar of Northern Ireland.

The evidence session was reported by Hansard.

Key issues discussed included: the assignment of post insolvency causes of action, the treatment of undisputed debts and the differences between NI and England and Wales in respect of these; virtual creditor meetings and deemed consent; court appointed insolvency practitioners; and the rights of a bankrupt spouse to the family home.

The Chairperson thanked the witness for his evidence.

The witness left the meeting at 10:48am.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department seeking an explanation and assurances on the issues discussed.

15. Forward Work Programme

The Committee considered its forward work programme including timings for legislative scrutiny evidence sessions.

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

16. Any Other Business

16.1 RHI (Closure of Domestic Scheme) Bill

Agreed: The Committee to write to the Department seeking the delegated powers memorandum and Keeling Schedule for the RHI (Closure of Non-Domestic Scheme) Bill.

Agreed: The Committee also agreed that the Clerk would share with Members the Chairperson's speech for the 2nd stage of the RHI (Closure of Non-Domestic Scheme) Bill.

17. Date, Time and Place of the next meeting

The next Economy Committee meeting is scheduled to begin on Wednesday 22 October 2025 at 9:15am in Room 30, Parliament Buildings, Stormont.

The Committee meeting was adjourned at 10:52am.

Phillip Brett MLA

Chairperson, Committee for the Economy

22 October 2025