



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Committee for the Economy

Minutes of Proceedings

Wednesday 17 June 2026

Meeting Location: Senate Chamber, Parliament Buildings

Present: Mr Phillip Brett MLA (Chairperson)
Ms Diane Forsythe (Deputy Chairperson)
Ms Diana Armstrong MLA
Mr Pádraig Delargy MLA
Mr David Honeyford MLA
Mr Declan Kearney MLA
Ms Kate Nicholl MLA

Apologies: Ms Sinéad McLaughlin MLA

In Attendance: Peter McCallion (Assembly Clerk)
Michael Greig (Senior Assistant Assembly Clerk)
Katie McMaster (Assistant Assembly Clerk)
Karen O'Hare (Clerical Supervisor)
Sarah Dowd (Clerical Officer)

The meeting commenced in open session at 9:51am.

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

The Chairperson advised Members that the Aerospace, Defence, Security and Space industry Group (ADS Group) had asked to meet with him informally as Chairperson to discuss related economic development

Agreed: The Committee agreed it was content for the Chairperson to meet informally with the ADS Group.

4. Draft Minutes

Agreed: The Committee agreed the minutes of the Economy Committee meeting of 10 June 2026.

Padraig Delargy joined the meeting at 9:51am.

5. Matters Arising

There were no matters arising.

6. SL1 RHI (Closure) Regulations 2026 – oral evidence

The following official joined the meeting at 9:52am:

- Catriona Harkin, Deputy Director, Energy Operations, Department for the Economy

This evidence session was recorded by Hansard.

Key issues discussed included: the draft RHI closure regulations; biomass standards and installer controls to be included within guidance; the delay to the associated primary legislation receiving Royal Assent and the Examiner of Statutory Rules

review of the regulations; application of RPI indexation to some installations; approximately 100 first annual payments to be delayed until October; stakeholder communications; hardship payments mechanism (within the 2012 regulations); the new payment portal going live; and the Annual Managed Expenditure biomethane project.

The Committee considered the draft regulations and the response to the call for views

The Chairperson thanked the official for her evidence.
The official left the meeting at 10:14am.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department seeking the timeline for the biomethane Annual Managed Expenditure investment, and the mechanism by which hardship payments might be made.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that it was content for the Department to make the rule, once the primary legislation has received Royal Assent.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Bill Office noting delays in achieving Royal Assent and seeking guidance as to how the Department can speed up this process going forward.

7. Tourism inspection and categorisation – oral evidence

The following officials joined the meeting at 10:15am:

- Stewart Matthews, Head of Tourism Policy and Legislation, DfE
- Ryan Crawford, Head of Investment Policy, DfE
- Suzi McIlhatton, Accommodation Certification Manager, Tourism NI

Key issues discussed included: tourist accommodation certification, investigations and court action; supporting data sharing agreements with Councils, NI Fire and Rescue Service and Land and Property Service; engagement with SOLACE; treatment of Air BnBs; staffing required within Tourism NI to support 2k visits per annum; certification fees and irregular expenditure; tourist accommodation certification and linkage to other permissions including planning permissions and entertainment licences; awareness raising of regulations via a media campaign; cross-Departmental co-operation; cross-border comparison and North/South divergence in accreditations; and the wider statutory review of regulations.

The Chairperson thanked the officials for their evidence.
The officials left the meeting at 10:59am.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department:

- welcoming the focus on quality in tourist accommodation;
- seeking clarity on the criteria Tourism NI applies to determine when it would investigate or rescind certification owing to other breaches e.g. planning or entertainment licenses etc.;

- seeking examples of cross-border alignment of tourist accommodation certification requirements; and
- encouraging the Department to use the forthcoming statutory review to address concerns in respect of the provision of certification when there is non-compliance with local government or other controls particularly in the case of short-term lets, glamping or new wedding venues etc..

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Committee for Infrastructure, in respect of its inquiry into planning issues and forwarding the relevant Departmental papers.

8. Correspondence

8.1 Index

Noted: The Committee noted an index of incoming correspondence.

8.2 Student Mobility

Noted: The Committee noted a Ministerial response in respect of student mobility issues including information on careers advice.

8.3 Departmental Spending

Noted: The Committee noted a Departmental response in respect of Departmental Spending 2025-26 and 2026-27, pending the Ministerial briefing on 23 June 2026.

8.4 Post-school SEN ETI Review

Noted: The Committee noted a Departmental holding response in respect of the post-school SEN review by the Education and Training Inspectorate.

8.5 UR Bill: Equality Impact

Noted: The Committee noted a Departmental response, in respect of the Utility Regulator (Support for Decarbonisation Preparation) Bill, enclosing the 2024 Equality Screening Assessment.

8.6 Areas with Natural Constraints (Payments) Bill

The Committee considered a call for evidence from the Committee for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs in respect of the Areas with Natural Constraints (Payments) Bill.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to issue a nil response.

8.7 Invest NI

Noted: The Committee noted correspondence from Invest NI, confirming attendees for the meeting of 1 July 2026.

8.8 Mutual Energy

Noted: The Committee noted correspondence from Mutual Energy presenting alternative views to Transmission Investment on mutualisation vs the cap and floor regime and arguing that NI already has a high level of interconnections.

8.9 Ulster Bank event

Noted: The Committee noted an invitation to attend the Ulster Bank Financial Inclusion & Growth Programmes Showcase on Tuesday 16 June 2026.

8.10 Insolvency Service Complaint

Noted: The Committee noted a restricted copy of correspondence from a concerned individual in respect of an Insolvency Service complaint.

8.11 Renewable Electricity Generation Bill

Noted: The Committee noted tabled Departmental correspondence in respect of the anticipated introduction of the Renewable Electricity Generation Bill.

9. Forward Work Programme

The Committee considered its forward work programme.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to launch a call for evidence in respect of the Regional Balance Bill on 24 June 2026 and prior to the 2nd stage of the Bill. The Committee agreed that this decision was neither an indication of support or opposition to the passage of the Regional Balance Bill at 2nd stage.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to defer consideration of how and when to launch a call for evidence for the Employment Rights Bill pending a reported planned Executive meeting on 24 June 2026.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to defer a briefing from the Competition and Markets Authority in respect of home heating oil until after summer recess.

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

10. Any Other Business

There was no other business.

11. Date, Time and Place of the next meeting

The next scheduled Economy Committee meeting will begin on Tuesday 23 June 2026 at 9:30am in Room 30, Parliament Buildings.

The Committee meeting was adjourned at 11:03am.

Phillip Brett MLA

Chairperson, Committee for the Economy

24 June 2026