



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Committee for the Economy

Minutes of Proceedings

2nd March 2022

Meeting Location: Room 30

In Attendance:

Mr John O'Dowd MLA
Mr Stephen Dunne MLA
Ms Claire Sugden MLA
Mr Peter Weir MLA
Mr Stewart Dickson MLA

Attendance by Video or Teleconference:

Dr Caoímhe Archibald (MLA (Chairperson))

Apologies:

Mr Matthew O'Toole MLA (Deputy Chairperson)*
Mr Keith Buchanan MLA*
Mr Mike Nesbitt MLA*

*N.B. These Members were required in the Chamber for an additional plenary meeting, necessitating their absence from the Committee meeting.



Northern Ireland
Assembly

In Attendance: Mr Peter Hall (Assembly Clerk)
Mr Thomas Armstrong (Assistant Assembly Clerk)
Mr Aaron Pakenham (Clerical Officer)

Attendance by Video or Teleconference:

Mr Michael Greer (Clerical Supervisor)
Ms Sinead Kelly (Assistant Assembly Clerk)

The meeting commenced at 10:07am in open session.

1. Apologies

As noted above.

2. Draft Minutes

Agreed: The Committee agreed the Minutes from 23rd February 2022.

3. Chairperson's Business

Agreed: Members agreed that Agenda Item 4 would be cancelled on the request of the Bill Sponsor given that the Bill would not proceed in the current mandate.

Noted: Members noted an update from the Chair following the meeting of the Inter-Parliamentary Forum in London on Friday.

Agreed: Members agreed that the panel members for the Independent Review of Invest NI will attend the informal meeting on 10th March.

4. Onshore Fracking (Prohibition) Bill – Bill Sponsor Briefing



Northern Ireland
Assembly

This item was cancelled as noted above.

5. Onshore Fracking (Prohibition) Bill – Briefing from Geological Survey NI

Members received a briefing from:

Dr Rob Raine Energy Geologist – Geological Survey (NI)

Key issues discussed included: technical aspects of hydraulic fracturing; the definition of fracking; the environmental impacts and nature of chemicals used in fracking.

The witness left the meeting at 10.40am

6. Invest NI Briefing – Update on Current Issues

Members received a briefing from:

Mel Chittock Interim Chief Executive – Invest NI

Rose Mary Stalker Board Chair – Invest NI

Alan McKeown Executive Director, Regional Business

Donal Durkan Executive Director, Strategy

Key issues discussed included: budgetary issues; the pause on letters of offer due to budgetary issues; issues around foreign direct investment; engagement with clients and wider business community; challenges of a single-year budget allocation; changes required to Invest NI approach as a result of aligning with the 10X economic vision; redeployment of Invest NI staff to the HSSS; regional spread of investment activity; level of inward investment projects; the impact of the planning process on FDI; and the role of Invest NI in City Deals.



Northern Ireland Assembly

Agreed: Members agreed to ask the Department to provide more information on a number of issues.

The witnesses left the meeting at 12.10pm.

7. Matters Arising

Noted: Members noted a response from the Department regarding the appointment of panel members to the Independent Review of Invest NI.

Noted: Members noted a response from the Minister of Finance regarding the Levelling Up White Paper.

Noted: Members noted a response from the UCU and Ulster University regarding the strike action by university lecturers.

Noted: Members noted NISRA data on the HSS Scheme.

8. Employment (Zero Hours Workers and Banded Weekly Working Hours) Bill

Members noted a number of written submissions on the Employment (Zero Hours Workers and Banded Weekly Working Hours) Bill and agreed to include these responses as part of the Bill report.

9. Public Consultation on Proposed Increases to the Financial Eligibility Limits for the NI Debt Relief Scheme

Members noted correspondence from the Department regarding the consultation on Proposed Increases to the Financial Eligibility Limits for the NI Debt Relief Scheme and that the consultation would close on 28th April and agreed to forward to stakeholders.

10. Correspondence



Northern Ireland Assembly

Noted: Members noted the Examiner of Statutory Rules - Fifteenth Report of Session 2021-2022.

Noted: Members noted the NI Fiscal Council – Stakeholder Engagement and Future Work Programme Report.

Noted: Members noted the NI Human Rights Consortium Strategic Plan 2022-25.

Noted: Members noted a response from BEIS to the Chair of the Protocol Committee regarding the Subsidy Control Bill.

Noted: Members noted the Investment Strategy NI Delivery Tracking System – DfE Investing Activity Report.

11. Any Other Business

Agreed: Members agreed to write to the Department regarding its role and the role of the Consumer Council in protecting against potential exploitation around increasing fuel prices.

Agreed: Members agreed to write to the Department regarding the establishment and role of the Fuel Task Force.

Agreed: Member agreed to write to the Department regarding the impact of changes to the law on the use of red diesel and the impact on businesses.

Agreed: Members agreed to write to the Department to ask for an urgent response on financial support for travel agents.

12. Date, Time and Place of Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Committee will take place on Wednesday 9th March 2022 in Room 30, Parliament Buildings at 10am.

The meeting was adjourned at 12.25pm.



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Dr Caoímhe Archibald MLA
Chairperson, Committee for the Economy