



Northern Ireland  
Assembly

# Committee for the Economy

## Minutes of Proceedings

3<sup>rd</sup> March 2021

**Meeting Location:** Room 30, Parliament Buildings

**Present:**

Dr Caoímhe Archibald (MLA (Chairperson))

**Present by Video or Teleconference:**

Mr Stewart Dickson MLA

Mr Paul Givan MLA

Ms Sinéad McLaughlin MLA (Deputy Chairperson)

Mr John O'Dowd MLA

Mr John Stewart MLA

Mr Christopher Stalford MLA

Ms Claire Sugden MLA

**Apologies:**

Mr Gordon Dunne MBE MLA

**In Attendance:**

Mr Peter Hall (Assembly Clerk)

Mr Thomas Manning (Clerical Officer)



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### **In Attendance by Video or Teleconference:**

Ms Sinead Kelly (Assistant Assembly Clerk)

Ms Maeve Holly (Assistant Assembly Clerk)

Mr Michael Greer (Clerical Supervisor)

The meeting commenced at 10.06am in open session

### **1. Apologies**

As noted above.

### **2. Draft Minutes**

**Agreed:** the Committee agreed the Minutes from 24<sup>th</sup> February 2021

### **3. Chairpersons Business**

The Chairperson informed Members of correspondence from the Speaker regarding a public petition from John O'Dowd MLA entitled "Extend the Covid Disruption Payment" that was laid in the Assembly on the 22<sup>nd</sup> February.

The Chairperson reminded Members of the "Speed up Britain" campaign that briefed the Committee during an informal meeting on the 25<sup>th</sup> February.

**Agreed:** to write to the Scottish Futures Trust seeking information on their work regarding these issues.

**Agreed:** to write to the Department regarding its remit with respect to 5G and the DCMS consultation.



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**Agreed:** to write to the Councils seeking their views.

### 4. Invest NI & Intertradelreland Briefing – EU Exit & NI Protocol

*The Officials joined the meeting at 10.15am*

Members received a briefing from:

<b>Kevin Holland,</b>	Chief Executive, Invest NI
<b>Donal Durkan,</b>	Executive Director, Strategy, Invest NI
<b>Margaret Hearty,</b>	Designated Officer, InterTradelreland
<b>Kerry Curran,</b>	Assistant Director of Strategy and Policy, InterTradelreland

Key issues discussed included: the Covid-19 support to local business, impact of the UK exit from the EU and the NI Protocol, new trading arrangements and the need to plan for economic recovery.

#### **The Officials left the meeting at 12.09pm**

**Agreed:** InterTradelreland to provide the most up to date figures available in relation to cross-border trade and that these figures be provided to the Committee on an ongoing basis as they are updated.

**Agreed:** Invest NI to supply further information on the 65 people working in Invest offices outside of Northern Ireland including a breakdown of the number of staff in each location and how the performance of these offices is measured.



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### 5. Matters Arising

**Noted:** Members noted a letter from the AERA Committee Clerk regarding the RHI Scheme.

**Agreed:** for the Clerk to respond sharing the responses the Committee has recently received.

**Noted:** Members noted correspondence from Lord Agnew regarding tariffs for Agri-Foods produced in Northern Ireland.

**Noted:** Members noted correspondence from the Treasury regarding support for students as a result of the lockdown.

**Agreed:** to ask the Department for further detail on the Barnett consequential and how this support will be targeted.

**Noted:** Members noted a response from the Minister regarding budget requirement for skills.

**Agreed:** to seek further details of the fund.

**Noted:** Members noted a response from the Minister regarding expanding the Covid-19 disruption payment scheme to include students.

**Agreed:** to write to the Minister suggesting that she tables an amendment to the Budget bill to allow financial support for students of theological colleges.

**Noted:** Members noted a response from the Minister regarding the FSB Furlough Proposal.

**Noted:** Members noted a response from the Minister regarding the administration and data gathering required for possible support measures for those impacted by the Covid-19 pandemic.

**Noted:** Members noted a response from the Department regarding an analysis on why there is a lower than expected number of Covid-19 support schemes by businesses.

**Noted:** Members noted correspondence from the Education Minister regarding an Independent review of education, recruitment and revised terms of reference.



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**Noted:** Members noted a response from the Department for Finance regarding support for Donaghadee Golf Club.

**Noted:** Members noted correspondence from the Department for Finance regarding the Spring Supplementary Estimates 2020-21.

**Noted:** Members noted correspondence from Domino's Pizza Group to the Health Minister and CMO.

### **6. SL1 - The Education (Student Fees and Support) (Amendment) (No.2) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2021**

Members considered SL1 – The Education (Student Fees and Support) (Amendment) (No.2) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2021.

**Agreed:** Members requested an urgent briefing on this SL1 by Departmental Officials.

### **7. SL1- Employment Rights (NI) Order 1996 (Coronavirus, Calculation of a Week's Pay) (Amendment) Regulations (NI) 2021**

Members considered SL1 – Employment Rights (NI) Order 1996 (Coronavirus, Calculation of a Week's Pay) (Amendment) Regulations (NI) 2021.

**Agreed:** Members indicated that they are content with the policy implications of the proposed legislation

**The Committee agreed to move to agenda item 13**



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**13. SL1- Corporate Insolvency and Governance Act 2020 (Coronavirus) (Amendment of Relevant Period in Schedule 8) Regulations (NI) 2020**

Members considered SL1- Corporate Insolvency and Governance Act 2020 (Coronavirus) (Amendment of Relevant Period in Schedule 8) Regulations (NI) 2020

**Agreed:** Members indicated that they are content with the policy implications of the proposed legislation

**The Committee agreed to return to agenda item 8.**

**8. Department for the Economy - Economic Recovery Action Plan**

Members considered the Departmental Written Briefing – Economic Recovery Action Plan.

**Agreed:** to seek a briefing from the Department on the plan.

**Agreed:** to seek stakeholders' views on the Plan.

**Agreed:** to write to the Minister regarding the Committee's views on/support for the Plan.

**9. Departmental Written Briefing - Petroleum Research**

Members considered the Departmental Written Briefing – Petroleum Research.

**Noted:** Members noted the written briefing.



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### 10. Correspondence

**Noted:** Members noted correspondence from the Clerk to the Committee for the Executive Office regarding any scrutiny of the effectiveness of the Northern Ireland Office's Business Engagement Forum.

**Agreed:** to write to the TEO Committee indicating that the Committee has written to the NIO several times on the issue and copying the correspondence.

**Noted:** Members noted a letter from the House of Lords European Union Committee regarding the EU's proposals on the UK domestic batteries framework covering both Northern Ireland and Great Britain.

**Noted:** Members noted correspondence from St. Johns Ambulance regarding its annual accounts.

**Agreed:** to write to the Minister to ask for assistance in ensuring that small limited companies are given an extension to complete their accounts.

**Noted:** Members noted correspondence from RHANI requesting a closed briefing from the renewable energy sector supply chain.

**Agreed:** to arrange an informal meeting.

**Noted:** Members noted a briefing paper from the Commons Library on the Turing Scheme designed to replace Erasmus.

**Agreed:** to ask the Department for further information on the replacement scheme and what input it has had to the development of the Turing Scheme.

**Noted:** Members noted correspondence from the CBI following its on 24<sup>th</sup> February regarding its Covid-19 Emergency Working Group meeting.

**Agreed:** to write to the Department of Health seeking an update on Covid-19 testing in the workplace.

**Noted:** Members noted the Twenty-seventh Report of the Examiner of Statutory Rules 2020-2021.

**Noted:** Members noted a memo from the Clerk to the Committee for Finance regarding engagement with the banking sector.



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**Agreed:** to respond highlighting that an informal meeting with UK Finance and the local banks has been arranged.

**Noted:** Members noted correspondence from the Minister to the Finance Committee regarding the Presbyterian Mutual Society.

**Noted:** Members noted correspondence from the TEO Committee to the Minister for Economy regarding a briefing from the NI Youth Forum on their report “Our Voices: Speaking truth to Power”.

**Noted:** Members noted correspondence from the National Insulation Association of Ireland proposing an insulation pilot project.

**Agreed:** to arrange a briefing

**Noted:** Members noted correspondence from the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds to the Finance Minister regarding their plan for a green recovery.

**Noted:** Members noted a report from Pivotal on Education Skills and training for young people aged 14-19 years old.

**Noted:** Members noted an invitation from the NI Impact Forum on Adult Learning to a webinar on the 19<sup>th</sup> March 2021 on “Creating a Culture of Lifelong Learning”

**Agreed:** that the Chairperson will attend and speak at the event.

**Noted:** Members noted correspondence from the Competition and Markets Authority on the creation of an Office for the Internal Market.

**Noted:** Members noted correspondence from Northern Mutual Ltd requesting to brief the Committee.

**Agreed:** to arrange an informal briefing.

**Noted:** Members noted Southern Regional College’s Annual Report and Accounts 2019-20.

**Noted:** Members noted the latest ISNI Assembly Committee Report.





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### 11. Any Other Business

Members discussed the recent announcement by Ulster Bank and Bank of Ireland regarding branch closures.

**Agreed:** to write to UK Finance seeking clarification that local banks act with caution reading the impact on local communities.

**Agreed:** to write to the Financial Conduct Authority to clarify its stance on branch closures and other significant changes during the Covid-19 pandemic.

**Agreed:** to seek a briefing from the Financial Services Union regarding the impact on its members following the recent announcements.

**Agreed:** to seek the views of a wide range of stakeholders regarding access to banking services going forward.

### 12. Date, Time and Place of the next meeting

The next meeting of the Committee will take place on Wednesday 10<sup>th</sup> March 2021 in Room 29, Parliament Buildings at 10am.

The meeting was adjourned at 1.14pm

**Dr Caoímhe Archibald MLA**  
**Chairperson, Committee for the Economy**  
**10<sup>th</sup> March 2021.**