



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Committee for the Economy

Draft Minutes of Proceedings

Wednesday 30 September 2026

Meeting Location: Room 30, Parliament Buildings

Present:

- Mr Phillip Brett MLA (Chairperson)
- Ms Diane Forsythe MLA (Deputy Chairperson)
- Mr David Honeyford MLA
- Mr Declan Kearney MLA
- Mr Peter Martin MLA
- Mr Mike Nesbitt MLA
- Ms Kate Nicholl MLA

Present by video-conferencing:

- Ms Sinéad McLaughlin MLA
- Mr Pádraig Delargy MLA

Apologies: None

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)

Angela Kelly (Examiner of Statutory Rules) - item 9 only

The meeting commenced in open session at 10:01am.

1. Apologies

Apologies were as indicated above.

2. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

3. Chairperson's Business

3.1 KESS

The Chairperson advised Members that he had been invited to give the opening remarks as Chairperson of the Economy Committee at two Knowledge Exchange Seminar Series (KESS) events. The first in respect of: Resilient Workforces in Northern Ireland and the second in respect of: Small Scale Renewable Energy in Northern Ireland.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that it was content for the Chairperson to contribute as requested to both events, diary permitting.

4. Draft Minutes

Agreed: The Committee agreed the minutes of the Economy Committee meeting of 23 September 2026.

5. Matters Arising

There were no matters arising.

6. NICVA - Local Growth Fund - Impact on the community and voluntary sector

Pádraig Delargy joined the meeting at 10:02am

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

- Jenny Potter - Director of Policy and Insight, NICVA;
- Kathy Maguire - Policy and Public Affairs Manager, NICVA; and
- Georgia Stanley - Policy Officer, NICVA.

Key issues discussed included: the Local Growth Fund and the split between capital and resource funding; the transition from the UK Shared Prosperity Fund; demand exceeding the supply for economic inactivity services; regional variations and associated barriers; the funding cliff edge and the potential loss of staff; the change of emphasis from skills to employment; the need for an overarching tertiary education provision and the linkage with Further Education colleges etc; disability pathways; tracking of economic inactivity impacts; the need for budget decisions and a top-up of the Local Growth Fund resource.

The Chairperson thanked the witnesses for their evidence.

The witnesses left the meeting at 10:46am.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department for the Economy highlighting the NICVA data and the need for overarching tertiary education and training provision which addresses economic inactivity consistently across Northern Ireland and in particular the needs of NEETs and excluded groups; and indicating support for a longer-term funding solution for the sector.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department for Communities highlighting the NICVA data and the need for overarching tertiary education and training provision which addresses economic inactivity consistently across Northern Ireland and in particular the needs of NEETs and excluded groups; and indicating support for a longer-term funding solution for the sector and encouraging the Department for Communities to share the NICVA data which demonstrates the effectiveness of provision with the Milburn review into young people and work.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department of Education highlighting the NICVA data and the need for overarching tertiary education and training provision which addresses economic inactivity consistently across Northern Ireland and in particular the needs of NEETs and excluded groups; and indicating support for a longer-term funding solution for the sector and encouraging the Department of Education to ensure schools are aware of the valuable economic inactivity services supported by NICVA member organisations.

7. LCM Commercial Payments Bill

The following officials joined the meeting at 10:48am:

- Colin Jack, Director, Business and Employment Regulation Division, DfE; and
- Michael Bradford, Employment Relations Work Life Balance and EU Exit, DfE

Proceedings were recorded by the Official Report.

Key issues discussed included: the Legislative Consent Memorandum and the anticipated approval by the Minister; the role of the Office for the Small Business Commissioner; thresholds for investigation and recuperation in respect of late payments; construction retention payments and related Department of Finance legislation; small business protections; and the Common Framework for related matters.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department indicating support for the LCM and seeking;

- detail on existing and anticipated thresholds for investigation and recuperation; and
- an update briefing from the Office for the Small Business Commissioner on her role and work in Northern Ireland.

8. LCM Sporting Events Bill

Noted: The Committee noted Departmental correspondence in respect of the Westminster Sporting Events Bill and the associated Legislative Consent Memorandum laid by the Department.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that it is content to consider a draft report in respect of the LCM on 7 October 2026.

Proceedings continued in closed session from 11:10am.

9. Petroleum Exploration and Licensing (Repeal) Bill Delegated Powers

Angela Kelly, the Examiner of Statutory Rules (ESR), joined the meeting at 11:10am.

Noted: The Committee noted the Examiner of Statutory Rules' report and the Henry VIII delegated powers in the Bill and the associated Assembly controls.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that amendments to the Bill in this regard were not required.

The Chairperson thanked the ESR for her briefing.

The ESR left the meeting at 11:15am.

Proceedings were suspended at 11:16am.
Proceedings resumed at 11:21am.

10. Petroleum Licensing Bill – formal Clause by Clause Scrutiny

Proceedings were recorded by the Official Report.

The following officials joined the meeting at 11:21am:

- Jimmy Graham, Director – Business Decarbonisation, Gas, Minerals and Renewable Electricity, DfE;
- Chris Nesbitt, Head of Minerals and Petroleum Branch, DfE; and
- John McManus, Minerals and Petroleum Branch, DfE

Peter Martin joined the meeting at 11:21am.

The Department provided assurances to the Committee in respect of the matters referenced in correspondence from Letterbreen and Mullaghduin Partnership (LAMP) – in respect of vesting, explicit prohibitions, the Windsor Framework and cross-border matters - and which had already been addressed at the meeting of 23 September 2026.

Clause 1: Principal Set of Repeals

Agreed: The Committee agreed it was content with Clause 1, as drafted.

Clause 2: Transitional Provision

Agreed: The Committee agreed it was content with Clause 2, as drafted.

Clause 3: Consequential Provision

Agreed: The Committee agreed it was content with Clause 3, as drafted.

Clause 4: Ancillary Regulations

Agreed: The Committee agreed it was content with Clause 4, as drafted.

Clause 5: Commencement

Agreed: The Committee agreed it was content with Clause 5, as drafted.

Clause 6: Short Title

Agreed: The Committee agreed it was content with the Short Title, as drafted.

Long Title

Agreed: The Committee agreed it was content with the Long Title, as drafted.

The Chairperson thanked the officials for their evidence.
The officials left the meeting at 11:27am.

Declan Kearney joined the meeting at 11:27am.

