



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Committee for the Economy

Draft Minutes of Proceedings

Wednesday 7 October 2026

Meeting Location: Board Room, Advanced Manufacturing Innovation Centre

Present:

Mr Phillip Brett MLA (Chairperson)

Ms Diane Forsythe MLA (Deputy Chairperson)

Mr Declan Kearney MLA

Mr Peter Martin MLA

Ms Sinéad McLaughlin MLA

Mr Mike Nesbitt MLA

Apologies:

Mr Pádraig Delargy MLA

Mr David Honeyford MLA

Ms Kate Nicholl MLA

In Attendance:

Peter McCallion (Assembly Clerk)

Michael Greig (Senior Assistant Assembly Clerk)

Karen O'Hare (Clerical Supervisor)

Aoibheann Baker (Bill Clerk) – Item 1 only

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

1. Utility Regulator (Support for Decarbonisation Preparation) Bill– Bill

Office advice

Aoibheann Baker joined the meeting at 10:07am.

Aoibheann provided advice in respect of the Committee Stage of the Utility Regulator (Support for Decarbonisation Preparation) Bill.

The Chairperson thanked Aoibheann for her advice.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Utility Regulator seeking formal confirmation that an extension of its vires to provide decarbonisation advice to departments in addition to the Department for the Economy would not likely present a resourcing issue.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department seeking:

- clarity on the resourcing implications of the extension of the vires of the Utility Regulator to provide decarbonisation advice to departments in addition to the Department for the Economy;
- an update on its work in respect of the regulation of the home heating oil market as regards vulnerable customers and breach of contract issues; and
- clarity on the development of Guaranteed Service Standards and the extent to which these might provide a legislative vehicle for the extension of home heating oil market measures including protections for the vulnerable and those addressing breach of contract issues.

Aoibheann Baker left the meeting at 10:20am.

Proceedings continued in public session at 10:21am.

2. Apologies

Apologies were as indicated above.

3. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

4. Chairperson's Business

4.1 AMIC Opening

The Chairperson advised Members that he attended the formal opening of AMIC yesterday in his capacity as Chairperson and encouraged those Members who could stay on to take the tour after the meeting.

4.2 Hospitality Rates Review

The Chairperson advised Members that he had been contacted by representatives of the hospitality who had reportedly been advised of an ongoing rates review process.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to Land and Property Services (LPS_ seeking clarity on the reported rates review and whether it would extend beyond the hospitality sector.

5. Draft Minutes

Agreed: The Committee agreed the minutes of the Economy Committee meeting of 30 September 2026.

6. Matters Arising

There were no matters arising.

7. Petroleum Exploration and Licensing (Repeal) Bill – Agreement of Report

The Committee considered a draft of the Petroleum Exploration and Licensing (Repeal) Bill Committee Stage report.

Agreed: The Committee agreed the Background section, as drafted.

Agreed: The Committee agreed the Committee Approach section, as drafted.

Agreed: The Committee agreed the Consideration of the Bill section, as drafted.

- Agreed:** The Committee agreed the Clause by Clause Scrutiny section, as drafted.
- Agreed:** The Committee agreed the Appendices, as drafted.
- Agreed:** The Committee agreed the Executive Summary section, as drafted.
- Agreed:** The Committee also agreed to include an extract from the minutes of 7 October 2026 in the report.
- Agreed:** The Committee agreed that the report should be published as its 8th report of the mandate.