



**Northern Ireland
Assembly**

Committee for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs

Room 417
Parliament Buildings
Tel: 028 9052 1369

**From: Dr Janice Thomson, Clerk to the Committee for Agriculture,
Environment and Rural Affairs**

To: Peter McCallion, Clerk to the Committee for the Economy

Date: 8 May 2026

Subject: Utility Regulator (Support for Decarbonisation Preparation) Bill

Dear Peter McCallion

The Committee for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs met on 7 May and considered your memo in respect of the Utility Regulator (Support for Decarbonisation Preparation) Bill, seeking any response the Committee wishes to make by 1 July 2026.

The Committee agreed to provide a nil response.

Regards

Dr Janice Thompson

Clerk to the Committee for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs

From: Kathy O'Hanlon, Clerk to the Committee for Justice
Date: 12 May 2026
To: Peter McCallion, Clerk to the Committee for the Economy
Subject: Utility Regulator (Support for Decarbonisation Preparation) Bill

Dear Peter,

At its meeting on 7 May 2026, the Committee for Justice considered your correspondence of 1 May 2026 regarding the Utility Regulator (Support for Decarbonisation Preparation) Bill call for evidence.

The Committee agreed to forward a nil response.

Kind regards,

Kathy O'Hanlon

Kathy O'Hanlon
Clerk to the Committee for Justice



**Northern Ireland
Assembly**

**Committee for Infrastructure
Room 416
Parliament Buildings**

Tel: +44 (0)28 9052 1787

To: Peter McCallion, Clerk to the Committee for the Economy
From: Michael Potter, Clerk to the Committee for Infrastructure
Date: 18 May 2026
**Subject: Petroleum Exploration and Licensing (Repeal) Bill and the Utility
Regulator (Support for Decarbonisation Preparation) Bill**

Dear Peter,

Thank you for your memos of 1 May 2026 regarding the Petroleum Exploration and Licensing (Repeal) Bill and the Utility Regulator (Support for Decarbonisation Preparation) Bill.

At its meeting on 13 May 2026, the Committee considered the Bills and accompanying EFMs and had no comment to make on either Bill.

Best Regards

Michael Potter
Clerk to the Committee for Infrastructure



**Northern Ireland
Assembly**

**Committee for Education
Room 428
Parliament Buildings**

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Email: committee.education@niassembly.gov.uk

To: Peter McCallion, Clerk to the Committee for the Economy

From: Aoibhinn Treanor, Clerk to the Committee for Education

Date: 18 May 2026

Subject: Utility Regulator (Support for Decarbonisation Preparation) Bill

At its meeting of 13 May 2026, the Committee for Education considered your correspondence, dated 01 May 2026, in respect of the call for evidence for the Utility Regulator (Support for Decarbonisation Preparation) Bill.

The Committee agreed to provide a nil response. If you require further information or clarification in respect of the above, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Aoibhinn Treanor
Clerk to the Committee for Education



**Northern Ireland
Assembly**

**Committee for Finance
Room 346
Parliament Buildings**

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E-mail: committee.finance@niassembly.gov.uk

**To: Peter McCallion
Clerk to the Committee for the Economy**

**From: Peter Hall
Clerk to the Committee for Finance**

Date: 29th May 2026

Subject: Utility Regulator Bill – Call for Evidence

Dear Peter,

In order to fully inform our Members response to the Economy Committee's Call for Evidence on the above Bill, the Committee for Finance agreed to request the Department of Finance's comments on this Bill at its meeting on 6th May.

At its meeting on 27th May the Committee considered the attached response and agreed to copy it to the Committee for the Economy, highlighting the comments made in relation to several policy areas, including building regulations, energy performance certification of public buildings' energy and emissions within the Bill.

I hope that the Committee for the Economy finds this information during its deliberations on the Bill

I would be grateful if you could bring this to your Committee's attention.

Regards,

**Peter Hall
Clerk to the Committee for Finance**

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**REQUEST FROM: FINANCE COMMITTEE – DALO READOUT - MEETING
WEDNESDAY 6 MAY 2026**

Point 5 – Economy Committee: Utility Regulator (Support for Decarbonisation Preparation) Bill: The Committee would ask the Department to consider this Bill and indicate if it has any remit or if there is any relevant policy locus within the Bill’s provisions. This will inform a response to the Economy Committee.

Response –

- The Utility Regulator (Support for Decarbonisation Preparation) Bill was agreed by the Executive in March 2026 and subsequently introduced to the Assembly on 20 April 2026.
- This legislation will provide the Utility Regulator with a legislative duty to provide the Department for the Economy (DfE) with advice, information, or assistance to support the development of energy policies necessary, which will help the Executive deliver against the Climate Change Act NI (2022) targets and the Executive’s Energy Strategy objectives.
- In terms of financial implications, DfE expect the costs of the Utility Regulator’s support to DfE in developing net zero policies would be met by licence fees paid by electricity and gas companies. Licence fees may only be used to fund work for net zero policy related to the Utility Regulator’s statutory electricity and gas functions. Any assistance from the Utility Regulator outside the scope of statutory electricity and gas functions cannot be funded in this way.
- DfE have acknowledged that the Utility Regulator and DfE will engage with the Department of Finance (DoF) in advance of any expenditure being incurred to consider the implications for the public purse. DoF’s position is that any additional expenditure arising should, in the first instance, be met by the sponsoring department. While there may be scope to seek additional resources through in-year monitoring rounds, the Committee will be aware of the significantly constrained budgetary environment within which such bids would be considered.
- DoF has no direct policy remit in respect of the Utility Regulator (Support for Decarbonisation Preparation) Bill. However, it has a relevant interest in several policy areas, including building regulations, energy performance certification or public buildings energy and emissions. It is anticipated that there will be arrangements in place so that DoF officials can draw on the support and engagement from the Utility Regulator’s new function.



**Northern Ireland
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Committee for Communities

Room 430

Parliament Buildings

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emer.boyle@niassembly.gov.uk

From: Emer Boyle, Clerk to the Committee for Communities
To: Peter McCallion, Clerk to the Committee for the Economy
Date: 28 May 2026
Subject: Utility Regulator (Support for Decarbonisation Preparation) Bill

Dear Peter,

1. Thank you for your memo of 1 May 2026 seeking the views of statutory committees on the Utility Regulator (Support for Decarbonisation Preparation) Bill.
2. The Committee for Communities has considered the matter and confirms a Nil Return. Given the nature of the Bill, the Committee has set out below a brief explanation of the basis on which it has reached that position, together with an observation regarding subsequent legislation.
3. In reaching its position, the Committee considered the Bill as introduced, the accompanying Explanatory and Financial Memorandum, the oral evidence provided by Department for the Economy officials to the Committee for the Economy on 22 April 2026, and the Official Report of the Bill's Second Stage debate on 28 April 2026.
4. The Committee notes that the Bill is short and technical in nature. Its single substantive clause confers on the Northern Ireland Authority for Utility Regulation (the Utility Regulator) a power to provide advice, information or assistance to the Department for the Economy in connection with the development of any proposal, policy, strategy or plan relating to the energy sector under the Climate Change

Act (Northern Ireland) 2022, together with a qualified duty to comply with reasonable departmental requests so far as reasonably practicable.

5. The Bill does not, of itself, alter any energy policy, impose or remove any obligation on any person, body or service user, or create or amend any function exercisable by any body within the Department for Communities' remit.
6. On that basis, the Committee for Communities is satisfied that the Bill, as introduced, does not engage the statutory responsibilities of the Department for Communities. The substantive decarbonisation policy choices to which the Bill relates – including heat policy, the future treatment of low-carbon heat technologies, and the cost-distributional consequences of the transition – do not arise on the face of this Bill. They will instead fall to be made in the subsequent programme of energy and decarbonisation legislation foreshadowed in the evidence given to the Committee for the Economy.
7. The Committee wishes, however, to record that it regards this Bill as the legislative gateway to that wider programme of decarbonisation policy, and that the programme will, in due course, engage the Department for Communities' remit more directly, in particular regarding heat policy and the social and supported housing stock, the relationship between decarbonisation policy and the Anti-Poverty Strategy 2025–2035, and the application of just transition principles to low-income households.
8. The Committee for Communities accordingly looks forward to engaging on the subsequent decarbonisation legislation that will more directly engage its remit.

Yours sincerely,

Emer Boyle

Clerk to the Committee for Communities