



Northern Ireland  
Assembly

# Committee for the Economy

## Minutes of Proceedings

**Wednesday 12 February 2025**

**Meeting Location: Room 30, Parliament buildings, Stormont.**

**Present:**

- Mr Phillip Brett MLA (Chairperson)
- Mr Gary Middleton MLA (Deputy Chairperson)
- Ms Diana Armstrong MLA
- Mr David Honeyford MLA
- Ms Sinéad McLaughlin MLA
- Ms Kate Nicholl MLA

**Present via video conferencing:**

- Mr Pádraig Delargy MLA
- Ms Emma Sheerin MLA

**Apologies:** Mr Jonathan Buckley MLA

**In Attendance:** Peter McCallion (Assembly Clerk)  
Anthea Matthews (Assistant Assembly Clerk)

Karen O'Hare (Clerical Supervisor)

Stuart Gilmour (Clerical Officer)

Eileen Regan, Senior Research Officer (RaISe) – item 8 only

Aidan Stennett, Research Officer (RaISe) – item 8 only

Michael Scholes, Research Officer (RaISe) – item 8 only

Nathan Mullholland, Research Officer (RaISe) – item 8 only

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

The Chairperson welcomed to the public gallery: Katie Crawford, university placement student.

## **1. Apologies**

Apologies were as indicated above.

## **2. Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

## **3. Chairperson's Business**

### **3.1 New Committee Member**

The Chairperson welcomed Emma Sheerin MLA to the Committee for the Economy.

### **3.2 Informal Meetings**

The Chairperson recorded a number of informal meetings:

- the Chairperson met informally with the City of London Corporation on Tuesday 11 February 2025;
- the Chairperson and Deputy Chairperson met informally with the Minister on Tuesday 11 February 2025; and

- a number of Members met informally with a delegation from the Bavarian State Parliament also on Tuesday 11 February 2025.

The Chairperson reminded Members that the Clerk had issued summary notes on each of these meetings.

### **3.3 Storm Éowyn**

The Chairperson reminded Members that in AQW 21377, the Minister had advised that NIE Networks Ltd is to produce a post major incident report on Storm Éowyn.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to write to NIE Networks Ltd seeking sight of the relevant post major incident report.

### **3.4 Skills Barometer**

The Chairperson reminded Members that the updated Skills Barometer had been published.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to invite UU Economic Policy Centre to brief on the Skills Barometer.

## **4. Draft Minutes**

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed the minutes of the Economy Committee meeting of 5 February 2025.

## **5. Matters Arising**

There were no matters arising.

## **6. Transmission Investment Ltd – Interconnection Issues – oral evidence session**

The following witnesses joined the meeting at 10:04am.

- James Dickson, Project Development Director, Transmission Investment Ltd;
- Mark Fitch, Corporate Development Director, Transmission Investment Ltd; and

- Holly McDonald, Regulatory Manager Transmission Investment Ltd.

Key issues discussed included: the LirIC project timeline; environmental assessments and seabed surveys; interconnection policy; the development of renewables and longer-term energy storage; planning issues; regulated interconnection income; impact on consumers; security of supply; role of Great British Energy; dispatch down; the LirIC post-development ownership model; and the need for co-operation between regulators and government policy departments.

The Chairperson thanked the witnesses for their evidence.

The witnesses left the meeting at 11:01am.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to write to Transmission Investment Ltd seeking further information on the modelled inflow and outflow of electricity to and from Northern Ireland via the interconnector and the modelled impact on dispatch down costs for Northern Ireland only.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to write to the Department seeking timelines for the development of the interconnection policy and the long duration energy storage policy

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to seek a briefing from the Utility Regulator on RP7 price control final determination.

## **7. Dundalk Institute of Technology (DkIT) – Cross-Border Educational Co-operation – oral evidence session**

The following witnesses joined the meeting at 11:03am:

- Dr Sheila Flanagan, Vice President Academic Affairs and Registrar, DkIT;
- Irene McCausland, Vice President for Strategy, Communications and Development, DkIT.
- Professor Fergal McCaffrey, Head of the School of Informatics and Creative Arts, DkIT; and
- Aidan Browne, Innovation and Business Development Manager, DkIT;

Padraig Delargy declared an interest in that relatives of his had previously attended DkIT.

Key issues discussed included: barriers to cross-border study; the RoI apprenticeships model; MoUs and relationships with industry; participation targets in the RoI National Access Plan; AI research and skills gaps; SECBA and other cross-border projects including Midas, Nexus and related measures including technology mini-hubs, workshops and SME support etc.

Diana Armstrong left the meeting at 11:56am

The Chairperson thanked the witnesses for their evidence.

The witnesses left the meeting at 12:07pm.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to write to the Council of Registrars in the RoI highlighting concerns in respect of grade conversion and late conditional offers as barriers to cross-border opportunities for students from Northern Ireland.

Proceedings were suspended at 12:07pm.

Proceedings resumed at 12:13pm.

## **8. Assembly Research - oral and written briefing – 2024-25 Spending Outturn and Draft Budget 2025-26**

The RalSe briefing commenced at 12:14pm.

The Committee received a briefing from RalSe on the 2024-25 Spending Outturn and Draft Budget 2025-26.

Padraig Delargy left the meeting at 12:25pm.

The Chairperson thanked RalSe for their briefing.

The RalSe briefing concluded at 12:34pm.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to share the RalSe paper with the Department and to consider further scrutiny options for the 2025-26 budget.

## **9. Delegated Legislation - Companies Disqualification**

The Committee considered the statutory rule entitled: SR 2025/14 The Companies (Disqualification Orders) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2025 and agreed the following motion:

**Agreed:** “That the Committee for the Economy has considered SR 2025/14 The Companies (Disqualification Orders) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2025 and subject to the report of the Examiner of Statutory Rules, has no objection to the rule”

## **10. Delegated Legislation - FE Student Support**

The Committee deferred consideration of the statutory rule entitled: SR 2025/20 The Further Education (Student Support) (Eligibility) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2025.

## **11. Correspondence**

### **11.1 Index**

**Noted:** The Committee noted an index of incoming correspondence.

### **11.2 First Day Brief - Budget**

**Noted:** The Committee noted a copy of a first day brief document from the Department.

### **11.3 Scottish Qualifications Authority**

**Noted:** The Committee noted Ministerial correspondence advising of changes to NI legislation which will be applied by the UKG in respect of the renaming of the Scottish Qualifications Authority.

### **11.4 Post Graduate Awards Scheme Consultation**

**Noted:** The Committee noted a Departmental response on the Post Graduate Awards Scheme consultation, providing information on the stakeholder engagement.

### **11.5 PAC Primacy**

**Noted:** The Committee noted correspondence from the Public Accounts Committee revising the primacy convention.

### **11.6 Cost of Doing Business in NI Research**

**Noted:** The Committee noted further information sent by the Committee for Finance on the “Cost of Doing Business in NI” research which has been commissioned by DoF.

### **11.7 ESR Report**

**Noted:** The Committee noted the ESR report referencing S.R 2025/13: The Public Interest Disclosure (Prescribed Persons) (Amendment) Order (Northern Ireland) 2025.

### **11.8 CITB NI Annual Report**

**Noted:** The Committee noted the Construction Industry Training Board NI Annual Report for the year ended 31 August 2024.

## **11.9 Belfast Stories**

**Noted:** The Committee noted correspondence from Belfast City Council welcoming the opportunity to host the Committee's visit to the site of Belfast Stories.

## **11.10 Invitation from Encirc Ltd**

The Committee considered an invitation from Encirc Ltd. to visit its Derrylin plant and a request to brief on biomethane and the consequences of the DAERA policy on Extended Producer Responsibility.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to schedule a visit to Encirc Ltd.

## **11.11 AI in Financial Services**

**Noted:** The Committee noted information from UK Finance on a training event on the use of AI in financial services.

## **11.12 Industrial Tribunal Processes**

**Noted:** The Committee noted restricted correspondence from a concerned individual relating to industrial tribunal processes and copies of related correspondence to others.

## **12. Forward Work Programme**

The Committee considered its forward work programme.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to include a visit to Royal Portrush Golf Club as organisers of The Open during its scheduled visit to Coleraine.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed its Forward Work Programme, as amended.



### **13. Any Other Business**

There was no other business.

### **14. Date, Time and Place of Next Meeting**

The next Economy Committee meeting is scheduled to begin on Wednesday 19 February 2025 at 10:00am in Room 30, Parliament Buildings Stormont.

The meeting was adjourned at 12:46pm.

**Phillip Brett MLA**

**Chairperson, Committee for the Economy**

**19 February 2025**