



Committee for the Economy

Minutes of Proceedings

Wednesday 11 February 2026

Meeting Location: Impact Training, Lanark Way, Belfast

Present: Mr Phillip Brett MLA (Chairperson)

Ms Diana Armstrong MLA

Mr Jonathan Buckley MLA

Miss Jemma Dolan MLA

Mr David Honeyford MLA

Ms Sinéad McLaughlin MLA

Apologies: Mr Gary Middleton MLA (Deputy Chairperson)

Mr Pádraig Delargy MLA

Ms Kate Nicholl MLA

In Attendance: Peter McCallion (Assembly Clerk)

Katie McMaster (Assistant Assembly Clerk)

Karen O'Hare (Clerical Supervisor)

Sarah Dowd (Clerical Officer)

Jonathan Redpath (Senior Assistant Bill Clerk) – item 1 only

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

1. RHI (Closure of Non-Domestic Scheme) Bill – Bill Office Guidance

Jonathan Redpath joined the meeting at 10:02am.

Jonathan provided advice in respect of the Committee Stage of the RHI (Closure of Non-Domestic Scheme) Bill.

The Chairperson thanked Jonathan for his briefing.

Jonathan Redpath left the meeting at 10:07am.

Proceedings continued in public session at 10:07am.

2. RHI (Closure of Non-Domestic Scheme) Bill – ECHR/Windsor Framework Memorandum – written briefing

The Committee considered a memorandum from Assembly Legal Services on the engagement of the RHI (Closure of Non-Domestic Scheme) Bill with the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR)/Windsor Framework.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that it was satisfied that any deprivation or controls in respect of RHI payments, which may be changed as a consequence of the passage of the Bill, are proportionate and strike a fair balance between the general interest of the community and the private interests of persons who have accredited RHI installations.

3. Apologies

Apologies were as indicated above.

Proceedings were suspended at 10:10am.

Proceedings resumed at 10:11am.

4. Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

5. Chairperson's Business

5.1 Informal Meeting

The Chairperson reminded Members of the Committee's informal meeting at SONI headquarters on 4 February 2026.

Noted: The Committee noted the circulated summary note of the informal meeting.

5.2 NISEP

The Chairperson referred Members to AQW 38725 where the Minister advised that a business case and regulations are to be developed in order to replace the Northern Ireland Sustainable Energy Programme (NISEP).

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department seeking further information on the way forward for NISEP.

5.3 Community Energy Project

David Honeyford advised of press reports in respect of Great British Energy's support for community energy projects in devolved jurisdictions of the United Kingdom.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department seeking clarification on community energy projects to be supported by Great British Energy in Northern Ireland and to seek a briefing from the Department and Great British Energy on related action plans.

6. Draft Minutes

Agreed: The Committee agreed the minutes of the Economy Committee meeting of 4 February 2026.

7. Matters Arising

7.1 Spam Correspondence

Noted: The Committee noted that previous correspondence in respect of a legitimate UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) event was in fact spam and that the Clerk had advised the organisers of the event accordingly.

There were no other matters arising.

8. RHI (Closure of Non-Domestic Scheme) Bill – Informal deliberations with the Department for the Economy

The following officials joined the meeting at 10:14am:

- Alan Smith, RHI Project Manager, DfE; and
- Catriona Harkin, Deputy Director, Energy Operations, DfE

Proceedings were reported by Hansard.

Key issues discussed included: use of metering data and calibration issues; unused AME funding; Ofgem's extension to the administration of the RHI scheme; future review based on changing fuel differentials; the development of guidance for participants; and the impact on rural communities.

The Committee informally deliberated on the RHI (Closure of Non-Domestic Scheme) Bill.

Clause 1(1) to 1(2): Scene setting

Agreed: The Committee informally agreed that it was content for this part of Clause 1 to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 1(3) to 1(5) and 1(12): Powers to bring regulations to partially or completely close the RHI Scheme

Agreed: The Committee informally agreed that it was content for this part of the Clause to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 1(6): Powers to bring regulations to revoke the 2012 regulations in support of scheme closure and to allow for these of historic data to calculate tariffs

Agreed: The Committee informally agreed that it was content for this part of the Clause to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 1(7): Powers to bring regulations, to allow for one-off, periodical or instalment payments, and for payments to be calculated on the basis of deemed or notional generation of heat

Agreed: The Committee informally agreed that it was content for this part of the Clause to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 1(8) and 1(13): Technical

Agreed: The Committee informally agreed that it was content for this part of the Clause to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 1(10) to 1(11): Powers to bring regulations, to allow for events that have occurred prior to the coming into operation of the Bill.

Agreed: The Committee informally agreed that it was content for this part of the Clause to stand part of the Bill.

Clause 2: Date of Operation and long title of the Bill

Agreed: The Committee informally agreed that it was content for the Clause to stand part of the Bill.

Other Matters

The Department commented that the regulations will allow for a change of ownership and for relocation of RHI installations.

Agreed: The Committee informally agreed it would therefore not bring related amendments to the Bill.

The Chairperson thanked the officials for their evidence.

The officials left the meeting at 10:33am.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department seeking clarification on how the remaining unused Annual Managed Expenditure (AME) will be utilised going forward following the agreement of closure arrangements for the Non-Domestic RHI Scheme.

Jemma Dolan joined the meeting at 10:34am.

The Committee altered the order of the agenda.

9. Spring Supplementary Estimates – Departmental Written Briefing

Noted: The Committee noted a written briefing provided by the Department including the Spring Supplementary Estimates Memorandum.

10. SL1 - The Employment Rights (Increase of Limits)

Noted: The Committee noted the proposed rule The Employment Rights (Increase of Limits) Order (Northern Ireland) 2026.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to issue a call for views on Citizen Space and to publish the proposed rule and related papers on the Committee's website.

Agreed: The Committee also agreed to write to the Department regarding the restoration of parity with the rest of the United Kingdom in respect of the level of limits and awards which are to be revised by the proposed rule.

11. Correspondence

11.1 Index

Noted: The Committee noted an index of incoming correspondence

11.2 HSE NI consultation - Health-And-Safety Legislation

Noted: The Committee noted Ministerial correspondence advising of a HSE NI consultation to remove ten items of health-and-safety legislation that are considered to be redundant or overtaken by more up to date regulations

11.3 Go Succeed

The Committee considered a Ministerial response in respect of Go Succeed indicating that the Department is to provide £2.53m of resource funding.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write a letter of thanks to the Minister for her work and commitment to the Go Succeed Programme.

Agreed: The Committee also agreed to schedule a briefing from Go Succeed.

11.4 NI Reval2026

Noted: The Committee noted a Ministerial response in respect of NI Reval2026.

11.5 Linden Foods

Noted: The Committee noted a Departmental response in respect of reported job losses at Linden Foods setting out Invest NI's response.

11.6 Support for ABP Food Group

Noted: The Committee noted a copy of correspondence from the Committee for Agriculture Environment and Rural Affairs to the Economy Minister in respect of support for the ABP Food Group.

11.7 TNI Compromise Payments

Noted: The Committee noted a Departmental response in respect of compromise payments in a previous Tourism NI Annual Report.

11.8 South West College Annual Report

Noted: The Committee noted the South West College Annual Report and Financial Statements for the year ending 31 July 2025.

11.9 Impact Training – DfE Briefing Paper

Noted: The Committee noted a Departmental paper on the Skills for Life and Work provider, Impact Training.

11.10 Youth Assembly January Update

Noted: The Committee noted the Youth Assembly monthly update for January 2026.

11.11 Advice NI Event

Noted: The Committee noted a “hold the date” for Advice NI’s ‘Sustainable Energy Communities NI’ event, taking place on Monday 8 June 2026 in the Long Gallery.

12. Forward Work Programme

The Committee considered its forward work programme.

Agreed: The Committee agreed its forward work programme, as amended.

13. Any Other Business

There was no other business.

Proceedings were suspended at 10:41am
Proceedings resumed at 10:48am

14. Employee Voice – Dr Lisa Wilson - oral and written evidence

Dr Lisa Wilson joined the meeting at 10:48am

Key issues discussed included: the impact of employee voice; unionisation of work places; the New Zealand employment rights model; the effect on small businesses and the manufacturing sector; a Code of Practice and associated penalties for non-adherence; employer apprehension and the knowledge gap; management skills and union representative training; communication with stakeholders; a phased implementation approach; and the impact on productivity.

The Chairperson thanked Dr Wilson for her evidence.
Dr Wilson left the meeting at 11:57am.

15. Date, Time and Place of the next meeting

The next Economy Committee meeting is scheduled to begin on Wednesday 18 February 2026 at 10:00am in Room 30, Parliament Buildings, Stormont.

The Committee meeting was adjourned at 11:58am.

Phillip Brett MLA

Chairperson, Committee for the Economy

18 February 2026