

**MINUTES OF PERMANENT SECRETARY GROUP MEETING  
HELD ON FRIDAY 16 SEPTEMBER 2005 IN ROOM GD14, STORMONT CASTLE  
AT 8.45 AM**

**Present:** Nigel Hamilton  
Will Haire  
John Hunter  
Andrew McCormick  
Aideen McGinley  
Gerry McGinn  
Stephen Peover  
Stephen Quinn  
Bruce Robinson  
Alan Shannon  
Pat Toal

**In Attendance:** Brian Doherty }  
George Gray } Agenda Item 5  
David Finegan }  
Greg McConnell }  
Jim McKeown }  
Rosemary Agnew – Agenda Item 4  
Rosalie Flanagan  
Stephen Grimason  
Debbie Sweeney (Secretary)

1. **Apologies:** Nick Perry
2. **Minutes and Summary**

The minutes of the meeting held on Friday 9 September were agreed.

3. **Matters Arising**

Northern Ireland Civil Contingencies Framework

Comments to CEPU by 30 September.

Secretary of State's Speech

Nigel Hamilton said the speech was currently with Phil Taylor and any further comments or inaccuracies within the speech should be forwarded to Tom Watson.

Nigel Hamilton referred to Fiona McCoy's minute of 15 September on the Way Forward and asked that the information requested should be forwarded to Rosalie Flanagan by 3.00 pm today.

#### 4. **Renewable Energy Presentation**

Pat Toal introduced Dr Rosemary Agnew from DARD Policy Development Branch.

Rosemary Agnew explained that DARD has published the consultation paper in order to seek views on a renewable energy policy for DARD over the period to 2012. The consultation will run until 31 December 2005.

The policy recommendations within the document were submitted to DARD from an inter-departmental group established in 2003.

There are over thirty specific recommendations in the document, which include:

- increased provision of education and training
- research and development/pilot projects prioritised
- renewable energy unit within DARD
- continuing support for establishment of energy crops

Rosemary explained that energy from renewables provides a sustainable source of heat and power generation that both contributes to reducing net greenhouse gas emissions and improving the security and diversity of energy supply. There is a substantial number of International, European Union and United Kingdom policy initiatives to promote the use of renewable energy sources as a means of establishing low carbon economies. EU Directives aim to encourage the promotion of electricity from renewable sources and promote combined heat and power systems and the use of biofuels for transportation.

Twenty-seven percent of electricity in the UK is generated from renewables. UK Government policy will be that 10% of the UK's electricity requirements should be met from renewable sources by 2010.

The objective of DARD's renewables policy is to promote the sustainable development of renewable energy from the agri-food and forestry sectors. Strategies and action plans for DARD to work alongside DETI and other stakeholders are to be developed.

In conclusion, Rosemary said that DARD has a significant interest in renewables and that the work of the inter-departmental group provides robust evidence on which to base policy. A very large number of issues need to be considered and DARD is developing future policy positions within the context of wider government policy.

#### 5. **RPA**

Greg McConnell gave an overview of progress on the RPA. The second and final consultation on the RPA will close on 30 September. Greg explained that there were still several significant decisions to be taken. It had been agreed that all Ministers should be involved in a meeting at which overall principles are agreed and key decisions taken. Following that, any remaining decisions would be taken by Ministers individually or bilaterally with

Jeff Rooker. Greg emphasised the need for close co-ordination of the implementation programme with a Minister designated as being responsible for the implementation and a Steering Committee, Chaired by Nigel Hamilton, with a core membership of Permanent Secretaries of DOE, DE, DHSSPS and DFP, with others joining as necessary. The final element would be a small unit with a lead role in any elements of the change programme located in OFMDFM or DFP.

Greg said the implementation may involve change of employment of people employed in the public sector. These matters would have to be handled sensitively, taking account of legislation and established practices. PSG noted the likely demand on the legislative programme, in the paper circulated by George Gray.

George Gray said the exercise would generate a high demand for resources in Departments and consideration should be given to getting staff in place in policy areas to take forward the implementation.

## 6. **Tour de Table**

### Budget

John Hunter said he would be issuing a Priorities and Budget 2006-07 and 2007-08 paper for discussion at Good Government on Wednesday 21 September.

### SDLP Conference

It was agreed that Peter Smyth/Paul Sweeney and a representative from DETI and DRD would attend the conference.

**[Rosalie Flanagan, Bruce Robinson and Stephen Quinn to note]**

### North Belfast

Bruce Robinson reported on the economic damage affecting Northern Ireland due to the continued violence in North Belfast.

### Investment Conference

Bruce Robinson said the Investment Conference, which may be held in April 2006, was building momentum and he was currently in discussions with the NIO and American participants.

### NED

Pat Toal informed PSG that Alan Lennon had been appointed as a NED.

### Sperrin Lakeland Trust

Andrew McCormick said there would be an announcement on the Trust on Monday 19 September.

**D A SWEENEY**  
**19 September 2005**