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Energy Division
Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment
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Dear Minister Bell,

Closure of the Northern Ireland Renewables Obligation to new onshore wind in 2016

We would like to have our concerns noted in response to the about turn with regard to the proposal for the early closure of NIRO in respect of on shore wind development in Northern Ireland. We have a number of potential clients who –in good faith- and acting upon the reassurance of the then DETI ministers statement of 18th June 2015, that there would be no early closure of NIRO proceeded with capital investment on the strength of that announcement.

We now find ourselves in a very difficult position with our clients. Clients who acted upon a commitment from a government minister, now find that there is no honour placed in the unqualified reassurance of 18th June 2015 that the Minister gave. If the minister perhaps feels that he has been misled –by DECC eg- does he expect that developers and investors working in an already fragile economy capitulate without some assurance that investments initiated post 18th June 2015 announcement be allowed to proceed with no alternative being in place?

If DECC have effectively decided that an early closure of NIRO is prudent then surely the same prudence should have guided any NI consultation. Now we are in a situation where an NI Minister reassured the people of NI just three and a half months previously of continued support for NIRO, a reassurance which now would appear to warrant only a token period of 2 week consultation. It would seem that NI is once again being discriminated against and bullied into acceptance of a DECC decision made on 1st June 2015.

I seek your confirmation that any investments made post 18th June 2015 be honoured and afforded the necessary time to complete the planning process and grid application process in accordance with the NIRO scheme.

I seek confirmation that NI small scale renewables in particular on shore wind will not be included in the removal of the NIRO scheme.

I seek confirmation that in the worst case, should NIRO scheme be discontinued in the future then an alternative scheme of support or FIT be coincidentally introduced to support the development of renewable energy following discontinuation of NIRO.

Yours faithfully

Martin Duggan