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The proposer will have 15 minutes to propose the motion and 15 minutes to wind. All other Members who wish to speak will have five minutes.  [Ms Lo (The Chairperson of the Committee for the Environment):](http://mmail.dods.co.uk/wf/click?upn=yeOVZorkTPgQPfchW6mXt-2FOGOKN3Sya492hdGBOwgt6ehWwPTHTn5cEP3N-2FrZ9GTJUornYknuSlJWJQMn0yfiJSnBcotAVvxGMk8c9XiW1GVzHpG1NFwVV5c-2BG4rJkcf_3YiO3g4OZ88zjwmUl85ryrr41X3s14Hz15ODy2H11NS8DcPOcmTja6F21jrN-2BZz4QLsDVAOUg-2BG-2FM48BXH7-2B1oK9idT3YN7f5ATsusKmU4O0jiPlo-2B32hUccJaGWVbcddJzAZwpotXVykl-2B853glqlTVlTNgBZmlRmn6Ar9K4yQFj0kOD-2BWAuPioVzrzPb8YCGoItE7PZCp-2B2tRcDn9iAwN9DGa5caIbXPbXdhzON5g-3D)  I beg to move  That this Assembly approves the report of the Committee for the Environment [NIA 226/11-16] on its Inquiry into Wind Energy in Northern Ireland; and calls on the Minister of the Environment to implement the recommendations contained in the report.  I would like to take the opportunity to express my appreciation to all those who have contributed to the inquiry and to thank the Committee staff, particularly the Clerk, Sheila Mawhinney, who has worked extremely hard to enable the Committee to gather evidence and produce the final report. I now wish to outline the circumstances that led to the Committee undertaking its inquiry. In June 2013, at an external meeting in Omagh, the Committee for the Environment had briefings from a group that opposes the siting of wind turbines in populated rural areas, and also from the Strabane/Omagh councils working group on wind energy. The Committee subsequently invited representatives from the Northern Ireland Renewables Industry Group to respond to the issues that had been raised. The evidence presented at those two meetings led the Committee to agree to carry out a short review in October and November 2013. It quickly became clear that issues that were emerging were largely cross-cutting and impacted on the remit of other Departments and the relevant Statutory Committees within the Assembly. Those included economic issues, such as subsidy by consumers of electricity and the impact on tourism of wind developments in areas of great scenic beauty, as well as possible health impacts arising from the proximity of wind turbines to homes. The Environment Committee agreed that economic and health issues may be more properly referred to other Statutory Committees, and that it should focus primarily on concerns raised in relation to environmental and planning matters that are more directly relevant to its remit. That was reflected in the terms of reference that were established for both the review and the inquiry. The Committee received 98 submissions in response to its call for evidence, and it agreed that the evidence that had been presented during the review should also be considered. The Committee had oral evidence sessions with a range of stakeholders and commissioned the services of a specialist acoustician to assist it with the technical aspects of the inquiry. In addition, the Committee carried out a fact-finding visit to west Tyrone to see a wind farm development at first hand, and it heard from residents who lived close by. After due consideration of the evidence before it, the Committee agreed on a number of recommendations. The Committee agreed that there was a need for a strategic approach in the siting of wind energy developments. The current policy is set out in planning policy statement (PPS) 18, with a slightly different approach proposed in the draft strategic planning policy statement (SPPS) that would remove the significant weighting of wider environmental, economic and social benefits considerations and urge a cautious approach to the siting of turbines in areas of outstanding natural beauty or other designated landscapes.  The Committee considered whether a strategic approach that advocated zoning or the identification of the most appropriate locations for wind turbines would be effective. It was agreed, however, that it was too late to introduce zoning in Northern Ireland because some areas, notably west Tyrone, have already reached saturation point in the number of wind developments, either operational or planned, for the region. However, the Committee identified a clear need for closer liaison between the strategic planning division and councils to ensure a joined-up approach and more cohesive planning for wind farms and individual turbines. That should be a natural outcome from the development over the next two years of local development plans for each council area. That liaison should also involve all relevant central government Departments and should reflect the aims of the regional development strategy and the strategic energy framework. The Committee expressed some concern that the term "economic considerations", which is used in PPS 18 and has been retained in the draft SPPS, has not been clearly defined, and it urges the Department to do so. The Committee acknowledges that some economic impacts may be intangible but believes that planning applications submitted by developers need to be very specific about the measurable economic outcomes of the project so that it is clear whether or not they have been delivered. The Committee agreed that the Department should carry out an audit of the effectiveness of PPS 18 in determining both the environmental and economic outputs of wind energy. The Committee believes that that exercise would be useful not only in establishing the effectiveness of PPS 18 but in determining future policy and practice. The Committee found that many submissions to the inquiry focused on the perceived inadequacies of current planning procedures and the cumulative impact of turbines. Members recognised that balancing individual applications against cumulative effect is a wider issue across planning, but the Committee has recommended that procedures be put in place so that a saturation point is clearly defined rather than it being the judgement call of individual planning officials. The Committee recommends that planning applications for connection to the grid be assessed at the same time as the turbine application and welcomes the Department's inclusion of that provision in its latest draft of the SPPS. The Committee believes that the requirement to notify neighbours who occupy buildings on land within 80 metres of the boundary of the application site is inadequate for the latest wind turbines, which may exceed 110 metres in height and have a much greater impact in open countryside than in an urban environment. The Committee recommends that the Department review that distance with a view to extending it beyond the current radius. The second term of reference of the inquiry focuses on wind turbine noise and separation distances from dwellings. This has been the most emotive aspect of the inquiry. Many submissions detail the adverse impact that perceived noise from wind turbines is having on respondents' daily lives. From the evidence put before the Committee, it seems apparent that current guidelines for permissible levels of noise are no longer adequate. The Committee, therefore, recommends that the Department urgently review the use of the ETSU-R-97 guidelines with a view to adopting more modern and robust guidance for the measurement of wind turbine noise.  12.15 pm  The Committee was concerned that there did not appear to be continuous, long-term monitoring of noise from wind farms, either by developers or by the relevant public sector organisations. Such information would provide developers and planners with factual evidence and a useful assessment measure for future applications. The Committee has recommended that the Department commission independent research to measure the impact of low-frequency noise on residents living in proximity to individual turbines and wind farms in Northern Ireland. The Committee has also recommended that the Department specify a minimum separation distance between wind turbines and dwellings. During the inquiry, the Committee received assurances from developers and the Department that wind turbines are generally a safe form of technology. However, the recent collapse of a turbine in Tyrone led to a recommendation that any lessons learned from the investigation, which is ongoing, be implemented as soon as possible.  [Mr Allister:](http://mmail.dods.co.uk/wf/click?upn=yeOVZorkTPgQPfchW6mXt-2FOGOKN3Sya492hdGBOwgt6ehWwPTHTn5cEP3N-2FrZ9GTZQiYbF3cs-2BUNUJLkTDMZa3ZHRljswQysMbH6OFwJpe55-2BPCQUZED210E8b1KMFbh_3YiO3g4OZ88zjwmUl85ryrr41X3s14Hz15ODy2H11NS8DcPOcmTja6F21jrN-2BZz4QLsDVAOUg-2BG-2FM48BXH7-2B1kvDv5BNF-2F7x7rs-2FCPfYY-2BqwMvtc3cTnm5KQtIO-2BTLdsQgHs-2FaLoq25hOIs0zos9XpCPOsR50VJPSkKzhn2WDJhl0RHGdbgjif3hRUUVI8QRsp8qUUrQKXMFzj-2BF-2F4DdJEfkwD9qEJtfeFaTiTxX5uo-3D)  Will the Member give way?  [Ms Lo:](http://mmail.dods.co.uk/wf/click?upn=yeOVZorkTPgQPfchW6mXt-2FOGOKN3Sya492hdGBOwgt6ehWwPTHTn5cEP3N-2FrZ9GTJUornYknuSlJWJQMn0yfiJSnBcotAVvxGMk8c9XiW1GVzHpG1NFwVV5c-2BG4rJkcf_3YiO3g4OZ88zjwmUl85ryrr41X3s14Hz15ODy2H11NS8DcPOcmTja6F21jrN-2BZz4QLsDVAOUg-2BG-2FM48BXH7-2B1pazyVAiEpG5DSQ9SvA9Je1srGzHEKDkUbK1ry4PfycVgVJZLq99Cdl8p2euEkGeZazT69ZJ-2BvdqEVgOdtr-2FIsqDxOcoQQYxabTxb1vHbAPcvnJyFEr2jiaQddX419yyUG4NQ8MmJYVUjylX7Uz71qo-3D)  Yes, sure.  [Mr Allister:](http://mmail.dods.co.uk/wf/click?upn=yeOVZorkTPgQPfchW6mXt-2FOGOKN3Sya492hdGBOwgt6ehWwPTHTn5cEP3N-2FrZ9GTZQiYbF3cs-2BUNUJLkTDMZa3ZHRljswQysMbH6OFwJpe55-2BPCQUZED210E8b1KMFbh_3YiO3g4OZ88zjwmUl85ryrr41X3s14Hz15ODy2H11NS8DcPOcmTja6F21jrN-2BZz4QLsDVAOUg-2BG-2FM48BXH7-2B1tdFuHn09q6zdQfp-2FVOUOcD6BKz2ABta9LpGcjNsdMQ9AcLtY-2Fq4oPT5aAu8tqBM1HW-2BL52IZTuzDe0KsMIkJIT5qq4qFDMWKR-2BTUG7hU9PlaPoJu7kJHGrGrTJOJzAb0GvZOZhMoGO-2BLHzrUqGm-2F6g-3D)  Does the Member agree that, if the turbine collapse that occurred in County Tyrone had occurred at one of the large quasi-urban sites, the consequential loss of life could have been catastrophic? I am thinking of turbines like those located in my constituency near the village of Broughshane, which are surrounded by houses. Is there not a need for a very emphatic distance requirement, given that what happened in Tyrone could, we are told, happen again?  [Ms Lo:](http://mmail.dods.co.uk/wf/click?upn=yeOVZorkTPgQPfchW6mXt-2FOGOKN3Sya492hdGBOwgt6ehWwPTHTn5cEP3N-2FrZ9GTJUornYknuSlJWJQMn0yfiJSnBcotAVvxGMk8c9XiW1GVzHpG1NFwVV5c-2BG4rJkcf_3YiO3g4OZ88zjwmUl85ryrr41X3s14Hz15ODy2H11NS8DcPOcmTja6F21jrN-2BZz4QLsDVAOUg-2BG-2FM48BXH7-2B1nAoV-2FR1t895R8A4JL2jvRC8tA0kYbyAitLRShrBhWD4UBPE49S-2F0hp0xc8NQWkruzoNWJpDbhu1Y67-2FC86nFSoiZNTsXB8nS3pLShnz2Ef1plf0b5DPyBLjyhJ2jVTvhzy1dLzjHWCWnTb2uyzysbU-3D)  Yes, I agree with the Member. We will keep a very close eye on the result of the investigation into that turbine collapse. The Committee report recommends a review of the separation distance and that that distance should be longer and wider than what the Department uses as guidance at the moment, particularly given that some turbines are taller now. We look forward to the response of the Department and the Minister to our recommendation on the separation distance. The final term of reference for the inquiry related to the extent of engagement by wind energy providers with communities and the promotion of such engagement. The Committee found that, although the wind industry is aware that engagement is vital and is moving towards a more robust standardised approach, many residents still feel marginalised in the whole process of siting wind developments near their homes. Often, community concerns about visual amenity, noise and health are not given due regard. The views of residents need to be listened to and considered, and changes need to be made, if possible, to take account of their views. It is not just about preparing reports; there is a need to act on their findings. The Committee has made a number of recommendations to promote timely and early engagement with communities. These include the mandatory use of a community engagement toolkit, the preparation of pre-application independent community engagement reports, and information events that are properly organised discussion sessions with opportunities for residents to have their questions answered. The Committee recommends that the level of community benefits payable be set at government level and that these should be made a condition of planning permission. A community benefits register, similar to the one in Scotland, should be set up as a public record of all types of benefit arising from wind developments.  The Committee believes that that would enhance transparency and accountability as well as providing a means of assessing the effectiveness of the schemes. In conclusion, the Committee has made recommendations that it hopes will promote a more inclusive approach and thereby result in a more meaningful and real form of engagement to address the concerns of the communities whose approach to the Committee gave rise to the inquiry.  [Lord Morrow:](http://mmail.dods.co.uk/wf/click?upn=yeOVZorkTPgQPfchW6mXt-2FOGOKN3Sya492hdGBOwgt6ehWwPTHTn5cEP3N-2FrZ9GT90LAJ4InijKdw13D9VkkrvzuSD-2Fd8FvXp9qncQeoPL9SrZVOPWWKEJD-2Bo-2FBZxFQ0_3YiO3g4OZ88zjwmUl85ryrr41X3s14Hz15ODy2H11NS8DcPOcmTja6F21jrN-2BZz4QLsDVAOUg-2BG-2FM48BXH7-2B1pt-2F2VtH1CIx8PZG-2FyDhS8C2BowQIAbU-2B5Eg7Ly-2F7ARoiZMLCUClbPZX0DWruKayTOc3sU0qPA7AkU1uH72SeG8h2zVzBW7MKCivW-2BHl1OO22NIGfeLAslwBRO1EpGOBeQ8WZtCBi4g5Mt09ssXrHPU-3D)  The Committee's findings could probably be summed up under four headings. Those are concerns about safety, about noise, about property values and about the impact on the landscape. Those were certainly the four messages that I got quite clearly from the evidence that we took from those who came to speak to the Committee, or, in some cases, who the Committee had gone to, particularly in west Tyrone. I also think that is reasonable to say that there are varying degrees of enthusiasm for the concept of wind energy, and I would be surprised if that does not manifest itself in the debate and the discussion that we will have. Without naming any names, I am aware of at least one Member who may not be the most enthusiastic supporter of wind energy. To some degree, I am a bit between the two. I still have to be convinced of the merits of wind energy, but I am not on the extreme side of the issue.  [Mr McNarry:](http://mmail.dods.co.uk/wf/click?upn=yeOVZorkTPgQPfchW6mXt-2FOGOKN3Sya492hdGBOwgt6ehWwPTHTn5cEP3N-2FrZ9GTtI89I9TcYfefQ0aKMMc0-2BoSEdCmCJJvEby3DOpEMGpdfHBV2RoTKwvgI7Y8-2F3Qhq_3YiO3g4OZ88zjwmUl85ryrr41X3s14Hz15ODy2H11NS8DcPOcmTja6F21jrN-2BZz4QLsDVAOUg-2BG-2FM48BXH7-2B1sjCO8VMhIyoD9SPTny5-2BZlU4eDUD1bX1Q2cfHhzQUhMRTzfmxMdo3kvwywJxS69k9zaxk-2FkKrRHqW7avpGplCaDJMwUSosce8faXce-2Bx2d59dyXs76zfofxZJEjqyE-2BtOPnjxUna9EmATnWJYe-2FcSo-3D)  Could you repeat that?  [Laughter.]  [Lord Morrow:](http://mmail.dods.co.uk/wf/click?upn=yeOVZorkTPgQPfchW6mXt-2FOGOKN3Sya492hdGBOwgt6ehWwPTHTn5cEP3N-2FrZ9GT90LAJ4InijKdw13D9VkkrvzuSD-2Fd8FvXp9qncQeoPL9SrZVOPWWKEJD-2Bo-2FBZxFQ0_3YiO3g4OZ88zjwmUl85ryrr41X3s14Hz15ODy2H11NS8DcPOcmTja6F21jrN-2BZz4QLsDVAOUg-2BG-2FM48BXH7-2B1kBiHsrPs3wJujdsZedf9BoMS3jNmGW0Wc9sYk9o1jlc7Voa-2F4FU6zXswQErnahxDCgHoEg64c4wvBeA-2BotAS-2BmuqFPURBrzi5EUacJ7OQxNTZuQriTvmZmLkl7TCsEu-2BjPP-2BC8KlVgAeVg65RfQMhw-3D)  I might repeat it at some other stage, but not just now. The wind energy providers are certainly very positive. For the life of me, I cannot think why they would be, but anyway. They outlined in some detail the merits of wind energy. Those who are still to be convinced are, to say the least, a bit sceptical. The Chair has probably already alluded to the fact that there were some 98 or 100 submissions to the inquiry, and I was pleasantly surprised at that in a positive way. As a result of the Committee's inquiry into wind energy, a number of recommendations were made to the Department of the Environment, including the need for a more strategic approach by the Department when considering planning applications for wind development. The Committee wants to see a closer liaison between planners at council and strategic division levels. I outlined that I thought that the four headings lay in safety, noise, property values and the impact on the landscape, and I want to say something about those. There are those who tell us that the whole thing is quite safe, but a large section of the community is still to be convinced of that. In an intervention, Mr Allister alluded to the incident outside Fivemiletown, where one of those monstrosities collapsed. That caused considerable concern among the general public because it could have been in a different setting. It was discovered that parts of that apparatus had left the site and gone some distance. Some photographs were produced, and I showed one of the photographs to a colleague and asked what it reminded him of. He said, "A plane crash". That is exactly what it looked like. Thankfully, it was not as dreadful as that. The noise impact will have to be taken seriously. There are varying arguments about whether there is a noise element or whether it is people's imagination. I do not believe that it is people's imagination. There are those who live in close proximity to the apparatus who have real and genuine concerns about the noise impact. I also have real concerns about the negative impact on property prices. Those who are pushing wind energy play that down, and that does a disservice to those with real concerns. I know for sure that, if I had a property in close proximity to a wind farm or one of these apparatus, I would have real concern about the value of my property. Mr Speaker, I see that you are giving me the nod to get on quickly. Let no one in this House or outside it say that it has no impact on the landscape: it has a detrimental impact on the landscape. I would like to see those particular issues given even more consideration. The Committee carried out a fairly exhaustive inquiry, but I believe that there is much more work to be done in some detail. I think that this is one issue that will come back to the Floor of this Assembly in the not-too-distant future.  [Mr Boylan:](http://mmail.dods.co.uk/wf/click?upn=yeOVZorkTPgQPfchW6mXt-2FOGOKN3Sya492hdGBOwgt6ehWwPTHTn5cEP3N-2FrZ9GTKTICH7XlpEqfC7KoKwA9nmseBE5-2BVUs7eoUlGE11s3MS2XNm9uhaK7AoVLoL4efU_3YiO3g4OZ88zjwmUl85ryrr41X3s14Hz15ODy2H11NS8DcPOcmTja6F21jrN-2BZz4QLsDVAOUg-2BG-2FM48BXH7-2B1thD-2F-2FdCheuoJpt07otDIV7zwatK1Hc0qFf8WIKE73JK9kYHkcQUjLF2qaVyKeeiBOvfEp5g6V2o8PgVQJcee42c5OxfrP4N5kVQLKfVTQT4QSULHXiYkoe7Tb-2ByEa4PWBpnZWD0TH-2FId5DyO7oWXNY-3D)  Go raibh maith agat, a Cheann Comhairle. Ba mhaith liom labhairt i bhfabhar an turascála seo. I welcome the opportunity to speak in favour of the report. First, before I go into detail on the report, I would like to acknowledge the point that Mr Allister raised about the wind turbine that came down in Tyrone. If it had come down in an urban setting, as he indicated, there would have been serious consequences. It raised the issue in Committee about the use of reconditioned wind turbines. Now, I do not know whether that was the case in that instance, nor do I know where we are with the investigation, but it is certainly something that we need to take a look at and follow up on in Committee. I want to put on record my thanks to all those who contributed in any way to the composition of this report. I want to put on record my thanks to our specialist adviser on acoustics, Ursula Walsh. I want to outline a couple of issues. I want to thank my Tyrone and West Tyrone colleagues, because that is where the whole idea of an inquiry and report came from initially. I want to put that on the record for those people because saturation was the issue that led to the inquiry in the first place. We must bear in mind that, in 2011, we signed up in the Programme for Government to reach a renewable target by a certain year. That is grand; we have signed up to that, but whether you are for or against wind turbines, we need to seriously look at some of the issues that raise their head in the report. The first that I want to talk about is what is known as the ETSU-R-97. Basically, it is the assessment and rating of wind turbine noise.  [Mr Wilson:](http://mmail.dods.co.uk/wf/click?upn=yeOVZorkTPgQPfchW6mXt-2FOGOKN3Sya492hdGBOwgt6ehWwPTHTn5cEP3N-2FrZ9GTf1gzrspxUx0yMxJG92eS8fQ3dPNE9Rd-2F1QBK-2F3fVOwSzC91fHIkrMt6cEPxabe2x_3YiO3g4OZ88zjwmUl85ryrr41X3s14Hz15ODy2H11NS8DcPOcmTja6F21jrN-2BZz4QLsDVAOUg-2BG-2FM48BXH7-2B1n-2BZ-2BgfV-2FY2Fa2qOclGVTp1tsf7W7igGxXlhin1Znu5XmpY5XP31GqlOq83v2uWyXMJqg-2Bqr4az1ZKsgosRc2TPZ0b2SY7jzbgBA2SAhhu-2F2jjEU2VZK8Z3MtzPTZPpVkI8kBQI67Jz3HZ8FSA9kx4A-3D)  I thank the Member for giving way. Does he accept that, if we are to meet the target that has been set for 2020, we are probably looking at setting up around another 1,500 of these turbines across Northern Ireland, so the cumulative impact that he has talked about is very important?  [Mr Speaker:](http://mmail.dods.co.uk/wf/click?upn=yeOVZorkTPgQPfchW6mXt-2FOGOKN3Sya492hdGBOwgt6ehWwPTHTn5cEP3N-2FrZ9GT0r8H5NThtbT8CNU-2BTi5FzN4DFTZbB3K6xdWhgc5crZI0vagO0PoCgYxXKdOcpG4o_3YiO3g4OZ88zjwmUl85ryrr41X3s14Hz15ODy2H11NS8DcPOcmTja6F21jrN-2BZz4QLsDVAOUg-2BG-2FM48BXH7-2B1vhVPSIkyfOzf0hGgc-2FLU-2FGaLu2JV0F3wSWUbaIuZ3-2Fk1QZuzZ97djKvbcSrF1KoAI279qU5K15teHIzaBGiEuqFc-2B7zmiJ7nmcLo8GDNQBxB-2F-2BzMLU2cA533U1klV75HZ55Ewz-2FJBQbbu-2BX0j-2F3Ts0-3D)  The Member has an extra minute.  [Mr Boylan:](http://mmail.dods.co.uk/wf/click?upn=yeOVZorkTPgQPfchW6mXt-2FOGOKN3Sya492hdGBOwgt6ehWwPTHTn5cEP3N-2FrZ9GTKTICH7XlpEqfC7KoKwA9nmseBE5-2BVUs7eoUlGE11s3MS2XNm9uhaK7AoVLoL4efU_3YiO3g4OZ88zjwmUl85ryrr41X3s14Hz15ODy2H11NS8DcPOcmTja6F21jrN-2BZz4QLsDVAOUg-2BG-2FM48BXH7-2B1suYltAgJAtwD3-2Fnz6Fz1S69q609TzHjh2mVqSfBUrOQh5-2BtGcKPXc6rtpQsUSWfmmJ6maRAiszMU93L7JCA3hEke3ZQzfIfj5fSnpq4ypOAU997zOp3tkI6QqoZpg255TpNY7Cg5xjSWrHt0o-2BirMQ-3D)  Thank you, Mr Speaker. I take that point on board. That very fact came up in part of the debate on the report. We are looking at that target, which may or may not be achievable, and the damage that it may actually cause on the far side of it, but —  [Ms Lo:](http://mmail.dods.co.uk/wf/click?upn=yeOVZorkTPgQPfchW6mXt-2FOGOKN3Sya492hdGBOwgt6ehWwPTHTn5cEP3N-2FrZ9GTJUornYknuSlJWJQMn0yfiJSnBcotAVvxGMk8c9XiW1GVzHpG1NFwVV5c-2BG4rJkcf_3YiO3g4OZ88zjwmUl85ryrr41X3s14Hz15ODy2H11NS8DcPOcmTja6F21jrN-2BZz4QLsDVAOUg-2BG-2FM48BXH7-2B1hAbsyOn4RpfcDTgxR8ixle1LN8-2FvaJBgdDLzsjzWHPDVVq6zEsHUexwEdxvWynYwSJTXGS8xCvqKNMx33RvN-2FdKQWApwyVFQBDZkW3OoLV829vmQgSGNwwaoFigkXp-2FZzsgFUk-2BsPA9ZXmlPaw28J4-3D)  Will the Member give way?  [Mr Boylan:](http://mmail.dods.co.uk/wf/click?upn=yeOVZorkTPgQPfchW6mXt-2FOGOKN3Sya492hdGBOwgt6ehWwPTHTn5cEP3N-2FrZ9GTKTICH7XlpEqfC7KoKwA9nmseBE5-2BVUs7eoUlGE11s3MS2XNm9uhaK7AoVLoL4efU_3YiO3g4OZ88zjwmUl85ryrr41X3s14Hz15ODy2H11NS8DcPOcmTja6F21jrN-2BZz4QLsDVAOUg-2BG-2FM48BXH7-2B1rixnZIxomeB5zDUHJtCwI2gxi79BDv2wV-2Fdxx9CtPm-2BOkGZCsqFP9W-2FS6cecf3KqaGJ6fcRef3uFMPy-2BMg9lc-2Bmz1oxSbQtnd-2BDZzkW9SkJo7M0HbxwoU-2FQsQo9oLnH28NDy2j8-2F-2FJYqu1FWwDawvA-3D)  Certainly.  [Ms Lo:](http://mmail.dods.co.uk/wf/click?upn=yeOVZorkTPgQPfchW6mXt-2FOGOKN3Sya492hdGBOwgt6ehWwPTHTn5cEP3N-2FrZ9GTJUornYknuSlJWJQMn0yfiJSnBcotAVvxGMk8c9XiW1GVzHpG1NFwVV5c-2BG4rJkcf_3YiO3g4OZ88zjwmUl85ryrr41X3s14Hz15ODy2H11NS8DcPOcmTja6F21jrN-2BZz4QLsDVAOUg-2BG-2FM48BXH7-2B1mRvyrTOT1ffFVMPD7rqo5E5a0ET5uhwpqNdnQV4CKjypihgvih-2FSfhTxCM0p6fc7U92-2FFpHyIZxJl969JkrtLIe3Oi7K4xSmHCjpsO8oU1D-2Fdt53MeoyCipz81njEf8dAwsEUEZvVRh7B0erG8y0zg-3D)  In answer to that; it does not necessarily mean that renewable energy has to come from wind turbines. We are urging for a mix of different types of renewable energy.  [Mr Boylan:](http://mmail.dods.co.uk/wf/click?upn=yeOVZorkTPgQPfchW6mXt-2FOGOKN3Sya492hdGBOwgt6ehWwPTHTn5cEP3N-2FrZ9GTKTICH7XlpEqfC7KoKwA9nmseBE5-2BVUs7eoUlGE11s3MS2XNm9uhaK7AoVLoL4efU_3YiO3g4OZ88zjwmUl85ryrr41X3s14Hz15ODy2H11NS8DcPOcmTja6F21jrN-2BZz4QLsDVAOUg-2BG-2FM48BXH7-2B1tvaOV-2BURL5cwDJU-2BQReiY9rNQXmbFXG7Z8XytDMoLqzK-2Fs9xxd3ELdMFhByR3chW2zNRVEWT9ev-2FotJsrMQIU2qtzXotAgOnfLBo6wD-2FcQZu5lhhFAicpx2ic4n1xAaCnIIZiEseW8h2IAp-2FDPYF-2F0-3D)  Sorry: I was interrupted during the intervention. I apologise to the Member. I will come back to you again. I will try to figure out what was said. With regard to what the previous Member said about the renewables target, we are discussing only wind energy here. There is a load of other renewable energy out there that we could test to meet the target. I want to add that point as well. I am sorry that I was interrupted during the Member's intervention. I just want to make a couple of points quickly. Certainly, noise was an issue for the Committee. There are question marks over the ETSU-R-97, which was brought out and, I think, followed by a review and guidance in May 2013. The question that needs to be asked is whether that document and those regulations are now fit for purpose. Maybe the Minister will respond to that. How does the Minister propose to deal with that under the new SPPS, or is it part of his thinking?  12.30 pm  [Mr Frew:](http://mmail.dods.co.uk/wf/click?upn=yeOVZorkTPgQPfchW6mXt-2FOGOKN3Sya492hdGBOwgt6ehWwPTHTn5cEP3N-2FrZ9GTsVPmZPbrW7UkZtXw0NsfKQuT1K2ALW7cl5BYRUvMC4BsqjHqYJg56bPGZois0Z-2Fr_3YiO3g4OZ88zjwmUl85ryrr41X3s14Hz15ODy2H11NS8DcPOcmTja6F21jrN-2BZz4QLsDVAOUg-2BG-2FM48BXH7-2B1ngiVPVYFxg5Fsx8BQfla1pSg7WhP1Z6Hb3JZ7VhnpRcnpPSWVTxTAuwJJViVdu7AEpl1Sa0HDCnDemSL7oYi4NwKH2Z6GVTGVjJc9lIQoJOQ56uex8LHB0oDYptd-2Fn2ELgRueqCD1ZZYKdy-2BjrVefE-3D)  Will the Member give way?  [Mr Boylan:](http://mmail.dods.co.uk/wf/click?upn=yeOVZorkTPgQPfchW6mXt-2FOGOKN3Sya492hdGBOwgt6ehWwPTHTn5cEP3N-2FrZ9GTKTICH7XlpEqfC7KoKwA9nmseBE5-2BVUs7eoUlGE11s3MS2XNm9uhaK7AoVLoL4efU_3YiO3g4OZ88zjwmUl85ryrr41X3s14Hz15ODy2H11NS8DcPOcmTja6F21jrN-2BZz4QLsDVAOUg-2BG-2FM48BXH7-2B1iHCSFFdY7Y1uOQo9JiuBk1jsBc183ULru0hq-2F-2F-2Bm0DFWDU1KSGtfa5sI3eXVLu-2FodaM5B-2BT-2BRlQr58JYM2tkuhdHzx13vpi0J6xhWeiPNruwIdjscPQuXa5LoINsG2TNuB1nTweM-2Buxl70gQtF25rg-3D)  Yes, go on ahead.  [Mr Frew:](http://mmail.dods.co.uk/wf/click?upn=yeOVZorkTPgQPfchW6mXt-2FOGOKN3Sya492hdGBOwgt6ehWwPTHTn5cEP3N-2FrZ9GTsVPmZPbrW7UkZtXw0NsfKQuT1K2ALW7cl5BYRUvMC4BsqjHqYJg56bPGZois0Z-2Fr_3YiO3g4OZ88zjwmUl85ryrr41X3s14Hz15ODy2H11NS8DcPOcmTja6F21jrN-2BZz4QLsDVAOUg-2BG-2FM48BXH7-2B1pgdFigggpYWcb-2BzKnU7bSiuyPsMgA8mQgzkdoh5oqMCuj9aFEdLO2sIm9xk0HRlv-2Bf-2BrthCBaO-2BG5AkJ3Q4g7nDGbwyQZOWX-2FgLqyL34fJeFcPB6dhiNAqoGwrxaVkMR8jEcReMx3w3mfJsZyDfDNo-3D)  I will be brief. He mentions the ETSU-R-97, which was published in 1996; it was to be reviewed two years after its publication. At present, it is handcuffing our environmental health officers to a document that is, basically, ignorant and idiotic.  [Mr Boylan:](http://mmail.dods.co.uk/wf/click?upn=yeOVZorkTPgQPfchW6mXt-2FOGOKN3Sya492hdGBOwgt6ehWwPTHTn5cEP3N-2FrZ9GTKTICH7XlpEqfC7KoKwA9nmseBE5-2BVUs7eoUlGE11s3MS2XNm9uhaK7AoVLoL4efU_3YiO3g4OZ88zjwmUl85ryrr41X3s14Hz15ODy2H11NS8DcPOcmTja6F21jrN-2BZz4QLsDVAOUg-2BG-2FM48BXH7-2B1utByoBBGWUXgajGK4-2BDRtEogcolnlegTJ5rqZvJANbm8ahljCExhf8Jxeq-2FuI5fuvASJO3F5-2BDFEQhXGsw2p-2Bo6v0gOUaMFtVUcLAMzQQYHQYdMrySiuGmUHF1UnDpCOatGN1ktsF7uxYI-2Bp8HLsgE-3D)  I agree. It was clearly shown as part of the review and the report. I would like the Minister to respond specifically to that point. I am running out of time, because I have taken so many interventions. The other major point that I want to talk about is community engagement. Throughout, we have heard how the community was engaged in the process. As part of one of the recommendations, they wanted to introduce a community toolkit. I want to read some of it quickly for the record. It provides guidance on the issues needed to consider when planning and designing your community engagement process; it focuses on quality and effective participation in community engagement processes; tools to help to plan and implement community engagement processes; and methods and techniques appropriate to your community engagement process. If we are to go forward, we need to engage with the community. I know that the process of better and up-front community engagement is part of the new planning regulations. Minister, that is something that I would like to see you take forward in your strategic planning policy statement. Unfortunately, I have run out of time.  [Mr Speaker:](http://mmail.dods.co.uk/wf/click?upn=yeOVZorkTPgQPfchW6mXt-2FOGOKN3Sya492hdGBOwgt6ehWwPTHTn5cEP3N-2FrZ9GT0r8H5NThtbT8CNU-2BTi5FzN4DFTZbB3K6xdWhgc5crZI0vagO0PoCgYxXKdOcpG4o_3YiO3g4OZ88zjwmUl85ryrr41X3s14Hz15ODy2H11NS8DcPOcmTja6F21jrN-2BZz4QLsDVAOUg-2BG-2FM48BXH7-2B1paiBVT0TK2CWhe1WZKTAFoBANQg97i9xSduNfeoYYERaYypw96Py-2Fub0KJbkp90jlwL0ipwR1pU0-2B200MwQ7GueLyWDVHerzo-2FrnUjYhSURbjtrZZVhhb1Q0fR6wX-2FHBIuPkqcSI-2F4th1X4scR4Y0U-3D)  Thank you very much. The Business Committee has arranged to meet immediately after the lunchtime suspension today. I propose, therefore, by leave of the Assembly, to suspend the sitting until 2·00 pm. The first item of business when we return will be Question Time.  The debate stood suspended.The sitting was suspended at 12.32 pm.  On resuming (Mr Deputy Speaker [Mr Dallat] in the Chair) —  2.00 pm  [Wind Energy Inquiry Report](http://mmail.dods.co.uk/wf/click?upn=yeOVZorkTPgQPfchW6mXt-2FOGOKN3Sya492hdGBOwgt5FICiJi4JllCHaVkpcT8YqTF2kXU5WvSOoYY2F0n-2FWVsQBp6KC8Y8J9-2BeMwLKdMivUsQb46YSoWPLZPaRL8D1N4Zhzk786-2Fc1rQ2vfarB6sESiHVQU4ZnwhRlZRBR3zoVkwGO93fPBXB0o72yM7CaXBgTwOkY2Pwt9-2BvCrpOs6XxtNKzW8ai5GWJ-2BLdgb6RxE-3D_3YiO3g4OZ88zjwmUl85ryrr41X3s14Hz15ODy2H11NS8DcPOcmTja6F21jrN-2BZz4QLsDVAOUg-2BG-2FM48BXH7-2B1jbSDmA9Xf9j700qbiKtXk-2BkxCJXW6yZnT5P3fYRFmUqEIjIIXIlg6qYxEqyFXcJ9rOX1JXW3zRUASm1M1dvn7RLFBInaOA1gZOiy4LG1nwvOCDdDKDNON3G5bpaYUuEz-2Bfd-2BbzuWZMJ0mafZw6FP0k-3D)  Debate resumed on motion:  That this Assembly approves the report of the Committee for the Environment [NIA 226/11-16] on its Inquiry into Wind Energy in Northern Ireland; and calls on the Minister of the Environment to implement the recommendations contained in the report. — [Ms Lo (The Chairperson of the Committee for the Environment).]  [Mr A Maginness:](http://mmail.dods.co.uk/wf/click?upn=yeOVZorkTPgQPfchW6mXt-2FOGOKN3Sya492hdGBOwgt6ehWwPTHTn5cEP3N-2FrZ9GT6UMuPZabPsWaHtUFv0nDJYy3y5h0tK87XTF2EkqIJ-2F1PIWSJ890vGlgDrj27cXrK_3YiO3g4OZ88zjwmUl85ryrr41X3s14Hz15ODy2H11NS8DcPOcmTja6F21jrN-2BZz4QLsDVAOUg-2BG-2FM48BXH7-2B1jMmwYEVAHvgOjN4mDT6DgWB4tSedAwtPE0SQJ-2BKmaVsbP21f8JpyENYfcvP-2Fotr5GjJEwWW0PFs92ffdUAxffHYiI1wqXxzK8EeIogu2TyjC7PaugAb4Yn-2BE8BWrSA3tdSV8yo14DCXnoplNglq2cU-3D)  I will speak as a member of the Environment Committee on the report produced on wind energy. I am a little bit disturbed and concerned about the way in which the debate is drifting. This is not about wind energy per se; it is about particular aspects of planning, separation distances, community engagement and so forth. So it is a given that we accept that a common good is derived from wind energy. It is important to remember that all parties in the House, without exception, support renewable energy and, indeed, wind energy in particular.  (Mr Deputy Speaker [Mr Beggs] in the Chair)  We, in this part of Europe, are blessed in having access to a considerable amount of wind, which is free and a source of renewable energy. It is important that we celebrate that —  [Mr Wilson:](http://mmail.dods.co.uk/wf/click?upn=yeOVZorkTPgQPfchW6mXt-2FOGOKN3Sya492hdGBOwgt6ehWwPTHTn5cEP3N-2FrZ9GTf1gzrspxUx0yMxJG92eS8fQ3dPNE9Rd-2F1QBK-2F3fVOwSzC91fHIkrMt6cEPxabe2x_3YiO3g4OZ88zjwmUl85ryrr41X3s14Hz15ODy2H11NS8DcPOcmTja6F21jrN-2BZz4QLsDVAOUg-2BG-2FM48BXH7-2B1tPJZNYMB0DGM23WCYQXBdkEIUu3HiioZUmVow4eFvjAxLrI5Ug-2F6I5PhgzJIALkPg6fa07DXQs7PoLyN8BuFc7V7Zg2wTssHkC33yuL-2Fs9oNaI2rEj1Azv-2Bn07d0LIf9nIuUlWSqigcYYqIy6bt-2BLc-3D)  Will the Member give way?  [Mr A Maginness:](http://mmail.dods.co.uk/wf/click?upn=yeOVZorkTPgQPfchW6mXt-2FOGOKN3Sya492hdGBOwgt6ehWwPTHTn5cEP3N-2FrZ9GT6UMuPZabPsWaHtUFv0nDJYy3y5h0tK87XTF2EkqIJ-2F1PIWSJ890vGlgDrj27cXrK_3YiO3g4OZ88zjwmUl85ryrr41X3s14Hz15ODy2H11NS8DcPOcmTja6F21jrN-2BZz4QLsDVAOUg-2BG-2FM48BXH7-2B1hDuFBIxRmxewBxA4Jg-2FYGC93idpV4fyoG3hn4ux-2BDRgF34Va940EVPyQRdX56k6C6nWbljc177z7pqEJQjuyRT1042TAjYTz7kohtehU8Gy6BqxNtH7ys5pCEyAYn4V-2FeQ8Gq5hd0EzVrbLy1JxcMs-3D)  — and I see the Member for East Antrim anxiously waving across the Benches, so I will give way to him.  [Mr Wilson:](http://mmail.dods.co.uk/wf/click?upn=yeOVZorkTPgQPfchW6mXt-2FOGOKN3Sya492hdGBOwgt6ehWwPTHTn5cEP3N-2FrZ9GTf1gzrspxUx0yMxJG92eS8fQ3dPNE9Rd-2F1QBK-2F3fVOwSzC91fHIkrMt6cEPxabe2x_3YiO3g4OZ88zjwmUl85ryrr41X3s14Hz15ODy2H11NS8DcPOcmTja6F21jrN-2BZz4QLsDVAOUg-2BG-2FM48BXH7-2B1k7YO1drsfH8jgjSrD1xNHjH3JlAU-2FMms65reM1FHo0qm0QF5KiPPCJmSJmmVKaymYIvf2BPMw1RJDpXBIZWcvbkaI6kzo-2FcrUgjToolPUbkW6Ug27tFP-2BGv6b2AprHQAWBYStGDOk0CUBd1QX1BYh0-3D)  Will the Member accept that, whilst wind is free, the means of turning wind into energy is the most expensive means of generating electricity, and, as a result of our dependence on it, we have added to fuel poverty and made industry less competitive?  [Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Beggs):](http://mmail.dods.co.uk/wf/click?upn=yeOVZorkTPgQPfchW6mXt-2FOGOKN3Sya492hdGBOwgt6ehWwPTHTn5cEP3N-2FrZ9GTOjSelBHSxOVAs7JwmNuSYl7VW0ufQ1C3zksqa5uKO7m3UFDdYIBKZexqNsUcyrXr_3YiO3g4OZ88zjwmUl85ryrr41X3s14Hz15ODy2H11NS8DcPOcmTja6F21jrN-2BZz4QLsDVAOUg-2BG-2FM48BXH7-2B1gPVmb65jcrkyxPejemjRRU9jSDpgidSzoOqBRm7k7D0GKITIMQcG8LTyTB3qinSCKsicAiIyV2udXRkZ8KQ2GzcA9rzaUCAFw32iZ5D972j7RxdSy7BNd1lEYU1nxnYFHxp02vu0QSZsgNgpqRN2FQ-3D)  The Member has an extra minute.  3.30 pm  [Mr A Maginness:](http://mmail.dods.co.uk/wf/click?upn=yeOVZorkTPgQPfchW6mXt-2FOGOKN3Sya492hdGBOwgt6ehWwPTHTn5cEP3N-2FrZ9GT6UMuPZabPsWaHtUFv0nDJYy3y5h0tK87XTF2EkqIJ-2F1PIWSJ890vGlgDrj27cXrK_3YiO3g4OZ88zjwmUl85ryrr41X3s14Hz15ODy2H11NS8DcPOcmTja6F21jrN-2BZz4QLsDVAOUg-2BG-2FM48BXH7-2B1oKy9KB1vnsgD7Yx4RwDDMiLOfT1-2BzxjFoBfQMnK3KNuCCVFnaRH4Sujmw0UhkUkJYIWC0RetIikn2P-2BR3a-2Fch9zdeW60ssa8eKJK8zplwTohNQ1xJngM9kNF3k2BU1XjOCyloi-2Bc70D1DpQ4OtQQgY-3D)  Thank you, Mr Deputy Speaker. I thank the Member for his intervention. I think that it is fallacious to say that wind energy is expensive. The fact is that, at this point in the development of wind energy as an alternative source of energy, it has to be subsidised because of the capital costs involved. This is an initial period, and it will, over time, decrease in its cost to the consumer and to society at large. I do accept the point that the Member made about the cost to industry, and, of course, the House is aware of that. The regulator is also aware of that, and, indeed, industry has taken significant steps to address that by also, curiously enough, using alternative renewable sources of energy to create its own in-house source of energy to provide for whatever it is producing. Those are my initial points. Throughout the inquiry, I think that the Committee worked to try to gauge the views of people who were concerned about different aspects of planning and so forth, and the report self-evidently addresses those issues. I hope that the Minister in due course will look at the report, be cognisant of the concerns that have been expressed by members of the public and take some action to ameliorate those concerns. One thing that impressed me was the attempts by those who are building wind farms or turbines to try to engage with the community. I think that that is very important. I think that, sometimes, their efforts are misunderstood and that it is thought that they are bribing a section of the community. I think that that is very unfair. An alternative to that, of course, is to engage the community in proactively developing alternative sources of energy. Indeed, this afternoon, I had the honour of attending the all-party group on co-operatives and mutuals, and the major theme there was using cooperatives or social enterprises of different sorts to involve the local community in the development of renewable energy, be it wind, solar energy or whatever. There is a very good example in Slaughtneil in County Derry, where the local community has come together in a social enterprise and has created wind energy by investing in a turbine. That is a benefit to the community for the next 20 years. The local school will benefit, the local sporting club will benefit and the community at large will benefit from that. That is very important, and I think that we should learn from that —  [Interruption.]  [Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Beggs):](http://mmail.dods.co.uk/wf/click?upn=yeOVZorkTPgQPfchW6mXt-2FOGOKN3Sya492hdGBOwgt6ehWwPTHTn5cEP3N-2FrZ9GTOjSelBHSxOVAs7JwmNuSYl7VW0ufQ1C3zksqa5uKO7m3UFDdYIBKZexqNsUcyrXr_3YiO3g4OZ88zjwmUl85ryrr41X3s14Hz15ODy2H11NS8DcPOcmTja6F21jrN-2BZz4QLsDVAOUg-2BG-2FM48BXH7-2B1gvM-2F-2B0a0wS1lJCFltkO6H-2FrJILNDN1p4BBHOCAzqk8LHID5YKAkiPQAl6lgaoOT9Hh0UrP1-2BWO87zXcABl-2Fjw7A-2BIF-2FZrvVj6Gp3S-2FuBpWvxWykVnmlM7JHpgrzxI0IrfSTKoeQ8ju1sUWvmbfTRuU-3D)  Can I ask the Member to resume his seat? We are waiting for advice.  [Mr Wilson:](http://mmail.dods.co.uk/wf/click?upn=yeOVZorkTPgQPfchW6mXt-2FOGOKN3Sya492hdGBOwgt6ehWwPTHTn5cEP3N-2FrZ9GTf1gzrspxUx0yMxJG92eS8fQ3dPNE9Rd-2F1QBK-2F3fVOwSzC91fHIkrMt6cEPxabe2x_3YiO3g4OZ88zjwmUl85ryrr41X3s14Hz15ODy2H11NS8DcPOcmTja6F21jrN-2BZz4QLsDVAOUg-2BG-2FM48BXH7-2B1vuZYLWxO8zc1p-2BfB-2B0mI6P8-2FfhPufBt1lfjUs7iY9-2BxvcWzNIwYb4LcnfQnuYCLGOhAFXyhHzCOih1EwPsTlGVzk4WnlWRewZkvyVTsqf-2F8ZQY-2F3OxE-2BeLX14lZmShBDew-2F-2FL5P31oMkpINrpldaUY-3D)  It is all hot air.  [Mr A Maginness:](http://mmail.dods.co.uk/wf/click?upn=yeOVZorkTPgQPfchW6mXt-2FOGOKN3Sya492hdGBOwgt6ehWwPTHTn5cEP3N-2FrZ9GT6UMuPZabPsWaHtUFv0nDJYy3y5h0tK87XTF2EkqIJ-2F1PIWSJ890vGlgDrj27cXrK_3YiO3g4OZ88zjwmUl85ryrr41X3s14Hz15ODy2H11NS8DcPOcmTja6F21jrN-2BZz4QLsDVAOUg-2BG-2FM48BXH7-2B1v9zVs23bRqy6E0UJSej5xj0jfO999O5J3GOujxYlLGg-2BKWVq82rfQfGhWF4W4CvJKWGjn7a4KnT7taaEl38RbARLKT2SlhQNd0SgWJZ2JWNeR-2BTWM8qLrr9sWbdFHzneC2aL-2B64GByHLimNUo0Sc0w-3D)  It was your interventions.  [Laughter.]  [Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Beggs):](http://mmail.dods.co.uk/wf/click?upn=yeOVZorkTPgQPfchW6mXt-2FOGOKN3Sya492hdGBOwgt6ehWwPTHTn5cEP3N-2FrZ9GTOjSelBHSxOVAs7JwmNuSYl7VW0ufQ1C3zksqa5uKO7m3UFDdYIBKZexqNsUcyrXr_3YiO3g4OZ88zjwmUl85ryrr41X3s14Hz15ODy2H11NS8DcPOcmTja6F21jrN-2BZz4QLsDVAOUg-2BG-2FM48BXH7-2B1lnI4Ldrp4kCp6eaJS443FJChdz14YMemEj8RSFVER9736xShSMuHphHq3-2BXIA08UU5-2F9pG6tHfgQ2jITfljFnz-2B5yjvEKwYENKo-2BlzBm8qvOnP898IJ0pgBE3ZRy-2FohQZQXHPhd6uHOqLrpOx6-2FVrM-3D)  I have been advised that we stay. I ask the Member to continue until we get further advice.  [Mr A Maginness:](http://mmail.dods.co.uk/wf/click?upn=yeOVZorkTPgQPfchW6mXt-2FOGOKN3Sya492hdGBOwgt6ehWwPTHTn5cEP3N-2FrZ9GT6UMuPZabPsWaHtUFv0nDJYy3y5h0tK87XTF2EkqIJ-2F1PIWSJ890vGlgDrj27cXrK_3YiO3g4OZ88zjwmUl85ryrr41X3s14Hz15ODy2H11NS8DcPOcmTja6F21jrN-2BZz4QLsDVAOUg-2BG-2FM48BXH7-2B1q1BoDeYEIGYhpnS1Y32iBiop8TJVXtzlOV1xEt5jfulLJ8kUt1sMj-2FH2gyqahak7bSWSUPfVSCZQnlOGz4fCA8sQEAFH84CusT7fLtg5o6QUoiBJnnUQBPFpkZ8gRPz5w7tZMQn6HitkUFj0B5oNbk-3D)  Mr Deputy Speaker, I am nearly at an end. I just want to say to the House that it is very important to have community engagement in all of this. I think that it will solve a lot of problems because the whole community is benefiting, not just some individuals in the community. I believe that that is a way forward in rural areas, and I hope that the good example shown in Slaughtneil can, in fact, be followed —  [Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Beggs):](http://mmail.dods.co.uk/wf/click?upn=yeOVZorkTPgQPfchW6mXt-2FOGOKN3Sya492hdGBOwgt6ehWwPTHTn5cEP3N-2FrZ9GTOjSelBHSxOVAs7JwmNuSYl7VW0ufQ1C3zksqa5uKO7m3UFDdYIBKZexqNsUcyrXr_3YiO3g4OZ88zjwmUl85ryrr41X3s14Hz15ODy2H11NS8DcPOcmTja6F21jrN-2BZz4QLsDVAOUg-2BG-2FM48BXH7-2B1vhamPmhiqwGDFuB21Tun6ObQZj8a-2FFyYUl11Vf3-2FzWxEHFI0tiTPoobRCP7ITooLDqHmOoO-2F8dVdbgsxPN4kB-2FKCOF47JKkY141ktx8Aow3oWmu7ZO-2BmuYfTYDcXqz8-2B16LIwpCP-2BeWpEhGjnqrifE-3D)  I ask the Member to draw his remarks to a close.  [Mr A Maginness:](http://mmail.dods.co.uk/wf/click?upn=yeOVZorkTPgQPfchW6mXt-2FOGOKN3Sya492hdGBOwgt6ehWwPTHTn5cEP3N-2FrZ9GT6UMuPZabPsWaHtUFv0nDJYy3y5h0tK87XTF2EkqIJ-2F1PIWSJ890vGlgDrj27cXrK_3YiO3g4OZ88zjwmUl85ryrr41X3s14Hz15ODy2H11NS8DcPOcmTja6F21jrN-2BZz4QLsDVAOUg-2BG-2FM48BXH7-2B1po1i11qTUPe-2BkvCUQvBcjLor2jKJWYsxeeq5HnR9sScji-2BZfgQonMBj195O0V-2FChUbDXf02AeB-2BjU7aLXSIL1ckMdpxiS5Ty7oCNMzqhGc9oQqCVM0TLz5Y1nwnvkeKcBNjJO7E-2Fd-2FgCBzmF97o8Xk-3D)  — by people in other areas.  [Mrs Overend:](http://mmail.dods.co.uk/wf/click?upn=yeOVZorkTPgQPfchW6mXt-2FOGOKN3Sya492hdGBOwgt6ehWwPTHTn5cEP3N-2FrZ9GT0-2FYpPd-2B6Nm-2FFU7cINKVnGs4szIxIfggLtALnwhsvNgtQLLQP-2FvZipNczpi2E3Pjv_3YiO3g4OZ88zjwmUl85ryrr41X3s14Hz15ODy2H11NS8DcPOcmTja6F21jrN-2BZz4QLsDVAOUg-2BG-2FM48BXH7-2B1lxf0e20FvjHkcebolm2-2BvhHgK92YLi-2Ftk6sxK23D8f-2B8QzeGdG-2F6W85pVwQ60AjKY9bNOP75sSDxcXml4fz2n8hDO7c37OBX-2FlkrRDZE1tZe-2FkJbf1e5O7vTRx12Fxgv03kppyFlaaCIPkoQfQboM0-3D)  I am not sure how safe it is to start, but start I will. I too welcome the report and thank the Committee Clerk and the staff for compiling it. It was a massive job. The inquiry started long before I was a member of the Environment Committee. In fact, I think that it started almost a year before I joined it. It is an issue that every MLA can relate to. There is no doubt that every elected represented has been lobbied in support of or against a wind turbine in their constituency or maybe on both sides of the argument, if you are lucky. Unfortunately, in many cases, it has pitted neighbour against neighbour. I therefore welcome the publication of the inquiry's report, as it seeks to bring some clarity to an issue that is becoming increasingly divisive in communities across Northern Ireland. Turbines are a relatively recent phenomenon. Until relatively recent times, consent for electricity generation was not a particular problem. The Executive set the targets to achieve 40% of electricity from renewable sources. Interestingly, the Member to my left, the Member for East Antrim, claimed that that target was unachievable, even though I understand that, for a year, he was the Minister of the Environment, which was the Department that championed it. With the development of technology and the increased drive for renewables, it was inevitable that planning consents would become an issue. Instead of Northern Ireland being overloaded with wind turbines, there needs to be an overarching strategic view on the siting of turbines, and planning consent is key to that. Many people, not least applicants, have criticised the system for taking too long, but it is essential that all factors be taken into consideration before decisions are made. Anything else would expose the Department to undue risk. We trust that the new councils will show the same caution when they take on many of the decisions after 1 April but not necessarily the extended delays that can come with it. There were problems with planning policy statement (PPS) 18, so the strategic planning policy statement (SPPS) at least presents a useful opportunity to put some of those to bed. That includes more obligations on developers to abide by noise limits and to ensure that all the relevant information is produced in the application process. The noise factor raised an interesting discussion in Committee, with research and evidence, and I am sure that the Minister will seek to take those on board. Along with noise pollution, one of the regular bones of contention with wind turbines is their proximity to residential properties. The Committee report makes a sensible suggestion, and we should look to extend the distance from the current 90 metres status. The recent fall of a wind turbine in County Tyrone highlighted that need. As the Committee learned during its evidence sessions, it is not just the noise that you hear standing nearby; often, it is more inconspicuous than that. So, whilst the fleeting observer may hear little, residents, backed up by evidence, talk of invasive noise. That leads to an array of problems, including sleep disturbance and deprivation. It is because of that disturbance that the Committee believes that the Department needs to improve the procedures for measuring that and, eventually, come to its own conclusion as to what an acceptable level of noise pollution is. I welcome the new cautious approach recommended in the SPPS to the siting of turbines in areas of outstanding natural beauty. In fact, at this stage, I thank the Minister and the Department for working with the Committee on the issue, particularly on the drafting of the SPPS. An important issue in the report is the call for economic considerations for assessing applications to be better defined, as it is very important not to be ambiguous in this matter. Perhaps that could counteract the presumption of favour in PPS 18. To conclude, wind turbines draw contention in every art and part of Northern Ireland. Their positioning is key to their success, yet that same point can strike fear and cause annoyance and even have implications for health. The Committee inquiry drew many positive conclusions and recommendations, and I commend them to the Minister.  [Mr Wilson:](http://mmail.dods.co.uk/wf/click?upn=yeOVZorkTPgQPfchW6mXt-2FOGOKN3Sya492hdGBOwgt6ehWwPTHTn5cEP3N-2FrZ9GTf1gzrspxUx0yMxJG92eS8fQ3dPNE9Rd-2F1QBK-2F3fVOwSzC91fHIkrMt6cEPxabe2x_3YiO3g4OZ88zjwmUl85ryrr41X3s14Hz15ODy2H11NS8DcPOcmTja6F21jrN-2BZz4QLsDVAOUg-2BG-2FM48BXH7-2B1ieWhSueHknGTwr3vyD703EXYkFIxTByDO1t3fxHVtlH3YIO0utpCmz9wjoggM972p1ExhO-2B1lrNcUZ5p5vfgkObUPC8WidqIo79Xxr1VGzy9qUfVi-2Bu7fQP8obiQengam2hIj1RA5MWzdNJVR1fW9M-3D)  First of all, this is a very important issue because there is increasing alarm in Northern Ireland at the march of the 300-feet-plus steel triffids across the countryside destroying the natural beauty of Northern Ireland but also having an impact on people's lives and health. When I started reading the report, I was a bit alarmed because, at the very start, the Committee talked about being mindful of the need to have renewable energy. I thought, "Right, what we're going to get here is a report that justifies the way in which the policy is being applied", but I must say I am pleased about a number of the recommendations. Prompted by yourself, Mr Deputy Speaker, earlier, the Member for South Antrim seemed to think that I was responsible for this liberal policy. The policy was drawn up at the time because there was no policy about wind turbines. Secondly, I was criticised for it being too draconian. I remember many questions in this House as to why the policy was stopping wind turbines being built. I say that partly in self defence but also because it is a warning that regardless of what changes may be required in planning policy, it will always have a degree of subjectivity. Therefore, it is often the guidance, instructions or will that come from the Minister's office that direct how the policy is interpreted. While I was environment Minister, it was probably interpreted in the way in which I hoped it would be, ie, that, as it states in PPS 18, where there was an unacceptable impact on human health, public safety, residential amenity, visual amenity, landscape character etc, these things should not be allowed. As I speak to planning officers in my area, I increasingly find that the answer is, "The Minister is keen on these happening", therefore the policy is interpreted in a way that I believe is much more liberal. I welcome some of the changes that have been asked for by the Committee. Always bear in mind, however, that if there is an overall drive and policy of pushing a particular aspect, then the policy itself may be interpreted in a way that even its drafters did not intend. The first aspect of the report that I welcome is the requirement that those who put up or wish to put up wind turbines have to show that they meet the noise standards rather than an environmental health officer having to do that work for them. The noise standards are out of date, and the World Health Organization has highlighted deficiencies in the current standards. We must look to having more up-to-date standards of measuring noise and its impact. The distance issue is also important. While there is no agreement across jurisdictions, some will have turbines as far as 3,000 metres from residential properties. That is important from not just the point of view of noise and the health impacts but the visual impact of wind turbines. It was always intended to be the case that the cumulative impact of wind turbines in an area ought to be considered. That means that where the local planning office may decide about an individual turbine, and strategically wind farms might be considered centrally, those two things should not be divorced.  [Mr A Maginness:](http://mmail.dods.co.uk/wf/click?upn=yeOVZorkTPgQPfchW6mXt-2FOGOKN3Sya492hdGBOwgt6ehWwPTHTn5cEP3N-2FrZ9GT6UMuPZabPsWaHtUFv0nDJYy3y5h0tK87XTF2EkqIJ-2F1PIWSJ890vGlgDrj27cXrK_3YiO3g4OZ88zjwmUl85ryrr41X3s14Hz15ODy2H11NS8DcPOcmTja6F21jrN-2BZz4QLsDVAOUg-2BG-2FM48BXH7-2B1tWoX1-2FFsyFYltmmq-2BkFQ2sAznNeMZ0KLzEUwcmi2pr3IOzLYvvSHOCZW5zcv0UjEY8excZvy4KE9bjxHdlhtNoerDL0-2F2e5ZqpM0Lir1V-2FG6G2jpHKWOUZVpUhV3P67DjUhJ-2F8GzZ6fr7beb6yqYjQ-3D)  Will the Member give way?  [Mr Wilson:](http://mmail.dods.co.uk/wf/click?upn=yeOVZorkTPgQPfchW6mXt-2FOGOKN3Sya492hdGBOwgt6ehWwPTHTn5cEP3N-2FrZ9GTf1gzrspxUx0yMxJG92eS8fQ3dPNE9Rd-2F1QBK-2F3fVOwSzC91fHIkrMt6cEPxabe2x_3YiO3g4OZ88zjwmUl85ryrr41X3s14Hz15ODy2H11NS8DcPOcmTja6F21jrN-2BZz4QLsDVAOUg-2BG-2FM48BXH7-2B1jwhf32XNUlqKsupqxmnCewElu5CvXPhFuUMpt7carjdbCXetMxVMBahBNiR9cZwlX32t4YYueVfnuqVbo3hsMesPttYhnZEYlcQUZ4a5988KkT-2F6AgjZXhTIFZY90bRni4ntWTKolJ5cdeagmHrcgY-3D)  Yes, I will.  [Mr A Maginness:](http://mmail.dods.co.uk/wf/click?upn=yeOVZorkTPgQPfchW6mXt-2FOGOKN3Sya492hdGBOwgt6ehWwPTHTn5cEP3N-2FrZ9GT6UMuPZabPsWaHtUFv0nDJYy3y5h0tK87XTF2EkqIJ-2F1PIWSJ890vGlgDrj27cXrK_3YiO3g4OZ88zjwmUl85ryrr41X3s14Hz15ODy2H11NS8DcPOcmTja6F21jrN-2BZz4QLsDVAOUg-2BG-2FM48BXH7-2B1n4QxUiPwIAAQ8U7NVldQbdYwdV4I1NusHEUjjuGRt14bQQzPxg0XnyoroALeJBuJ9g-2FBGZWpSEDUETDYvYFawVcTVLPnb2tr8NBTanBk5dkSRR-2F6iG2O1L1BylVldMTFEvDG-2B82l-2BTsZOyed-2Baecls-3D)  The Member talks about the over-concentration and saturation point. In accordance with standard planning decision-making, planners look at individual applications. With restaurants or fast-food bars, for example, they do not say there are 20 fast-food bars on the Antrim Road, therefore we will not entertain any further ones. It is the individual applications that the planners look at.  3.45 pm  [Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Beggs):](http://mmail.dods.co.uk/wf/click?upn=yeOVZorkTPgQPfchW6mXt-2FOGOKN3Sya492hdGBOwgt6ehWwPTHTn5cEP3N-2FrZ9GTOjSelBHSxOVAs7JwmNuSYl7VW0ufQ1C3zksqa5uKO7m3UFDdYIBKZexqNsUcyrXr_3YiO3g4OZ88zjwmUl85ryrr41X3s14Hz15ODy2H11NS8DcPOcmTja6F21jrN-2BZz4QLsDVAOUg-2BG-2FM48BXH7-2B1tfUP-2Bivh7vUE8xYqW32C-2B5-2FXD6IgfaUOiEtWCdw7jV355cJK7-2FIweZQb5Yrbi6rKfuzfTfRULlOwW4Cyg5p40c6jRMVETai-2Bny8aCdwlHl4ZtVQL8k-2B5J-2FA5IEmaaPxqxYr7A-2BCwKzPFAn5b-2FCWZtU-3D)  The Member has an extra minute.  [Mr Wilson:](http://mmail.dods.co.uk/wf/click?upn=yeOVZorkTPgQPfchW6mXt-2FOGOKN3Sya492hdGBOwgt6ehWwPTHTn5cEP3N-2FrZ9GTf1gzrspxUx0yMxJG92eS8fQ3dPNE9Rd-2F1QBK-2F3fVOwSzC91fHIkrMt6cEPxabe2x_3YiO3g4OZ88zjwmUl85ryrr41X3s14Hz15ODy2H11NS8DcPOcmTja6F21jrN-2BZz4QLsDVAOUg-2BG-2FM48BXH7-2B1j9t2cnq0HSlNsm8kUnHb-2B7BcWwM21wk6GDVPQincaHqQ88JIbXQlOC-2FO22lq5qgHhn-2BtfqcWW2ngjWY1Mx7n1nlPdjtfOWtjflQ6E9WXFuZPnMnYEA6Jbv4Js9XcNbnuu7Y6ztokHrA3RjymITeUVM-3D)  That may well be the case, but, when you look at the impact of huge 320-feet turbines on a landscape environment, you have to look at the cumulative impact. The proposition always was that there should be a requirement to look at the cumulative impact. If you see the forest of these things in some areas, it makes sense —  [Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Beggs):](http://mmail.dods.co.uk/wf/click?upn=yeOVZorkTPgQPfchW6mXt-2FOGOKN3Sya492hdGBOwgt6ehWwPTHTn5cEP3N-2FrZ9GTOjSelBHSxOVAs7JwmNuSYl7VW0ufQ1C3zksqa5uKO7m3UFDdYIBKZexqNsUcyrXr_3YiO3g4OZ88zjwmUl85ryrr41X3s14Hz15ODy2H11NS8DcPOcmTja6F21jrN-2BZz4QLsDVAOUg-2BG-2FM48BXH7-2B1tN5jGJGwLPAa4RUW1ulBchu6FoQ-2BP8ijppDu4EfrXJ5FvO-2BSAjk7yFpCNmk5O9eDO-2Ff-2Fa7kzE-2BSVh7yw9hmhVpkwBJlgaXC8h1OOt7k2gS2rI-2BDNlOjsViMszMByDN-2FNOyhlfofgZCy0z5yDm6HJhQ-3D)  Will the Member draw his remarks to a close?  [Mr Wilson:](http://mmail.dods.co.uk/wf/click?upn=yeOVZorkTPgQPfchW6mXt-2FOGOKN3Sya492hdGBOwgt6ehWwPTHTn5cEP3N-2FrZ9GTf1gzrspxUx0yMxJG92eS8fQ3dPNE9Rd-2F1QBK-2F3fVOwSzC91fHIkrMt6cEPxabe2x_3YiO3g4OZ88zjwmUl85ryrr41X3s14Hz15ODy2H11NS8DcPOcmTja6F21jrN-2BZz4QLsDVAOUg-2BG-2FM48BXH7-2B1v9olnflzYQazUu42gUZmtB1gRue3jqS-2Bi-2Bjpes-2BA4ehmt4S5yLKhtCGVElefAvU5UopVe0Kf8Ixhs6f1k8x5ITRK1z-2F74LoydIVMRpEOHsyHjXfxF99X-2F8dXbn4g2mPcql1KNUKFqb3Z48y00c9GiU-3D)  — not to look at them individually. I welcome the report and the thoroughness with which it has been done, though I utter caution that, despite what changes might be made, if the direction comes from the top to —  [Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Beggs):](http://mmail.dods.co.uk/wf/click?upn=yeOVZorkTPgQPfchW6mXt-2FOGOKN3Sya492hdGBOwgt6ehWwPTHTn5cEP3N-2FrZ9GTOjSelBHSxOVAs7JwmNuSYl7VW0ufQ1C3zksqa5uKO7m3UFDdYIBKZexqNsUcyrXr_3YiO3g4OZ88zjwmUl85ryrr41X3s14Hz15ODy2H11NS8DcPOcmTja6F21jrN-2BZz4QLsDVAOUg-2BG-2FM48BXH7-2B1gJCTf2yM69OLKE1u2JPb9cwwr26RahKk9yxG8Aj-2Fxm5Mhaf-2BPvhlTKJHKG8Onk4Lnym1I93owubDKOYVNpzh8-2FqVGjtmF3aJlGt-2FGFSKFdaSuEaGQtpSnY0b7Bkbo9bgtkIqYY4YMr1YqFfitKg68c-3D)  The Member's time is up.  [Mr Wilson:](http://mmail.dods.co.uk/wf/click?upn=yeOVZorkTPgQPfchW6mXt-2FOGOKN3Sya492hdGBOwgt6ehWwPTHTn5cEP3N-2FrZ9GTf1gzrspxUx0yMxJG92eS8fQ3dPNE9Rd-2F1QBK-2F3fVOwSzC91fHIkrMt6cEPxabe2x_3YiO3g4OZ88zjwmUl85ryrr41X3s14Hz15ODy2H11NS8DcPOcmTja6F21jrN-2BZz4QLsDVAOUg-2BG-2FM48BXH7-2B1rdfDpzc3KoWpUwficbeQFGESxWnILPn6Zx36Dt4kUN4YyXaB59G4UabGP15dUUwdUiGufDya18N-2FiQLuFwxzP5uqMNOtOByp2CIEBWttt36AeoMj0fU8KxLyLz1s4O1vIsxGEiw8GNgbQR0sej0nhY-3D)  — interpret it liberally, any policy —  [Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Beggs):](http://mmail.dods.co.uk/wf/click?upn=yeOVZorkTPgQPfchW6mXt-2FOGOKN3Sya492hdGBOwgt6ehWwPTHTn5cEP3N-2FrZ9GTOjSelBHSxOVAs7JwmNuSYl7VW0ufQ1C3zksqa5uKO7m3UFDdYIBKZexqNsUcyrXr_3YiO3g4OZ88zjwmUl85ryrr41X3s14Hz15ODy2H11NS8DcPOcmTja6F21jrN-2BZz4QLsDVAOUg-2BG-2FM48BXH7-2B1qoTgcYRE3kWEOEvUsGT9vAP0D1Zihq4zlYF1Xl2MkSkuSnYrvyfBsJHmfQSnlJGyM42wxlFBBunwgYoiQntOmIGEylRdMSE8uLqPOLInoYNHmoI0rBALxwl4KBB9G11iE7Sjp4yE-2FEIkM1fSWXdV5I-3D)  The Member's time is up.  [Mr Wilson:](http://mmail.dods.co.uk/wf/click?upn=yeOVZorkTPgQPfchW6mXt-2FOGOKN3Sya492hdGBOwgt6ehWwPTHTn5cEP3N-2FrZ9GTf1gzrspxUx0yMxJG92eS8fQ3dPNE9Rd-2F1QBK-2F3fVOwSzC91fHIkrMt6cEPxabe2x_3YiO3g4OZ88zjwmUl85ryrr41X3s14Hz15ODy2H11NS8DcPOcmTja6F21jrN-2BZz4QLsDVAOUg-2BG-2FM48BXH7-2B1jy-2FXgatqlGeH-2BJsC58Q5tVATMD1gzU7z5XQzxicMgmkduUm23KLNKyNMuexM-2FqHFpG9DPvB4pU8sOVGIRfo3w81F1bZDFyy9F6E72ejuENyYGp-2BG73auJKO4FGbQlU77eOYFensCbpNkZl7EeN6rg8-3D)  — will always be defective.  [Mr McElduff:](http://mmail.dods.co.uk/wf/click?upn=yeOVZorkTPgQPfchW6mXt-2FOGOKN3Sya492hdGBOwgt6ehWwPTHTn5cEP3N-2FrZ9GTio1otmTmbuwDYeihucnlSdObiIo3ped1g7Bg43Eno2rbl1LkxyQ50e4dDTSp7ygF_3YiO3g4OZ88zjwmUl85ryrr41X3s14Hz15ODy2H11NS8DcPOcmTja6F21jrN-2BZz4QLsDVAOUg-2BG-2FM48BXH7-2B1jX4Rvjg2HNw2v0KOU2ekpgUOD0U9XNj2s2Z7eupV8b7Fgmk40VHmggGVDSRz2tbHV8w8mrwcSG4NLGsClvwZ7hG2FA90n5gXO0bEme0JyUwOp2Lxr55OkE81lhwmf-2FeZrzTst-2BgmaDX6CtIkUtkMSk-3D)  Go raibh maith agat, a LeasCheann Comhairle. At the outset, I, too, want to thank the Clerk and staff of the Committee, as well as our Chairperson, Anna Lo, and Deputy Chairperson, Pamela Cameron, for their leadership throughout the inquiry. I endorse the Chair's statement ahead of today's debate, which essentially calls for a more strategic approach in the siting of wind infrastructure and an urgent review of current noise guidelines. I suppose that the recommendations contained in the report constitute advice to government, principally to the Minister of the Environment and the Department generally. Yesterday, a Sinn Féin delegation met the Minister and senior planning officials from his Department, and they have undertaken to give full and thorough consideration to the report. They would have liked the timing to be different, as, with the development of the single planning policy statement and the report being almost coincidental, they are unable at this point to take full account of the recommendations in our report. I refer to paragraph 3 of the report. My party is supportive of Programme for Government targets, but my colleague Cathal Boylan made the point earlier that we cannot ignore the concerns of local residents who have questioned the way in which that target is being achieved through an over-reliance on wind energy and an underemphasis on and underutilisation of other renewable energy sources. What about the key conclusions and recommendations? In paragraph 18, there is specific mention of my constituency of West Tyrone and the issue of saturation point. In paragraph 22, there is reference to a cumulative impact and saturation point in the number of wind developments that are either operational in or planned for an area. Paragraph 18 highlights the fact that, hitherto, there has been a lack of a strategic approach to zoning or identifying the most appropriate locations for wind turbines. I am aware of a number of large-scale applications in the pipeline. One of those is described as Doraville, and it has wide implications for communities in the Glenelly valley in south Derry and the part of the Sperrins in Broughderg. Indeed, I helped to facilitate a pre-application hearing for residents in respect of that application, and the scale of it is most worrying. I want to commend the local group of residents from the Lisnaharney area, which is in close proximity to Gortin, who have a very positive and proactive community development agenda for that beautiful part of the Sperrins near Gortin. Their plan for the future to create jobs and build tourism is based largely on exploiting the outdoor recreation potential of that area, and, in their submission, they point to the detrimental impact on visual amenity of a large-scale wind farm application and possible displacement of jobs in the tourism sector.  On the one hand, the industry will emphasise jobs created by wind farms and, on the other hand, groups like Lisnaharney Area Residents Group will emphasise displacement of jobs through lost tourism potential. Reference is made in paragraphs 10 and 11 to wind turbine regulations — ETSU-97 or ETSU-R-97 — and there is general agreement that these need to be reviewed, that local government authorities and environmental health departments are far too stretched by regularly adjudicating on such matters and that perhaps there should be more of an onus on developers to prove that the noise regulations are being adhered to. There are many questions for the Minister. For example —  [Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Beggs):](http://mmail.dods.co.uk/wf/click?upn=yeOVZorkTPgQPfchW6mXt-2FOGOKN3Sya492hdGBOwgt6ehWwPTHTn5cEP3N-2FrZ9GTOjSelBHSxOVAs7JwmNuSYl7VW0ufQ1C3zksqa5uKO7m3UFDdYIBKZexqNsUcyrXr_3YiO3g4OZ88zjwmUl85ryrr41X3s14Hz15ODy2H11NS8DcPOcmTja6F21jrN-2BZz4QLsDVAOUg-2BG-2FM48BXH7-2B1pDw9dU9MPf80HkbHb3fes-2BOXian3TvIPrKl6SIo-2BcXyIZVImkeR-2FT3OCOS665eys4nHiII2nm-2BWBPct29o-2BMzXUO5rbD1DNp1Dwvvq8mQtRmm26HH6ZI2wqSEqVUVzwZ7PPQx07rhCp01txgVJQRhY-3D)  I ask the Member to draw his remarks to a close.  [Mr McElduff:](http://mmail.dods.co.uk/wf/click?upn=yeOVZorkTPgQPfchW6mXt-2FOGOKN3Sya492hdGBOwgt6ehWwPTHTn5cEP3N-2FrZ9GTio1otmTmbuwDYeihucnlSdObiIo3ped1g7Bg43Eno2rbl1LkxyQ50e4dDTSp7ygF_3YiO3g4OZ88zjwmUl85ryrr41X3s14Hz15ODy2H11NS8DcPOcmTja6F21jrN-2BZz4QLsDVAOUg-2BG-2FM48BXH7-2B1sz5gs2L-2Ftf3vlrq3RZvr-2FDjHzDp8Fr53KCFkBehFljisLKq0IRdOUQ4dhJEhyIJBtO2Q0uXylMnEBU8U1CQeyb3JfyTY4g-2B0RAzcJEIklkDE7nl6onryfSEDXKl8ZeYvGyMFGSuA80jhhKg5RLJ9Y4-3D)  — why are so many non-determination appeals taking place? Why are people not even waiting for a refusal and going straight to appeal? Does the Minister have anything to say about the Screggagh incident?  [Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Beggs):](http://mmail.dods.co.uk/wf/click?upn=yeOVZorkTPgQPfchW6mXt-2FOGOKN3Sya492hdGBOwgt6ehWwPTHTn5cEP3N-2FrZ9GTOjSelBHSxOVAs7JwmNuSYl7VW0ufQ1C3zksqa5uKO7m3UFDdYIBKZexqNsUcyrXr_3YiO3g4OZ88zjwmUl85ryrr41X3s14Hz15ODy2H11NS8DcPOcmTja6F21jrN-2BZz4QLsDVAOUg-2BG-2FM48BXH7-2B1ptSLT-2BaHnGKV0tixY4KLq7JJRsdvCBFK-2BOWNPa1-2BwgpJsPoaN2kts3UbVwfbqTbC9f3G18cgHyaezq-2FJOK8-2B0sJH4SNTB5uDsGWWkdGilkNT4VSBN1ZnR47ILLhroFzPx48Zfw62UIanoQmwd6bmf8-3D)  The Member's time is up.  [Mr Agnew:](http://mmail.dods.co.uk/wf/click?upn=yeOVZorkTPgQPfchW6mXt-2FOGOKN3Sya492hdGBOwgt6ehWwPTHTn5cEP3N-2FrZ9GTDtpaolPe2Dk5Bdj-2BRQZlTEEH-2FAGb4-2FgB7O3y1TCqncPdFxbEgmsDBkWLd8lVSiqT_3YiO3g4OZ88zjwmUl85ryrr41X3s14Hz15ODy2H11NS8DcPOcmTja6F21jrN-2BZz4QLsDVAOUg-2BG-2FM48BXH7-2B1pip745E8iBEip5s6zR5tMsbnGoaUrPLltUu6rQf7n5mlWv-2Ft62Z43wTK8RcS4rzUjABoZc0cmpQUW8Fv8uv0vMuPRZCRXIqtMs4XT7A64vpxHekmAybb5Jlz7ZN-2BkquEAhy2xMiDMdV0rCdS6bEOcg-3D)  I welcome the debate and the Committee's focus on wind energy. As a supporter of wind energy, I want community buy-in for good wind projects based on good consultation. I also want the implementation of many of the measures that are called for in the report to promote community benefit, engagement and, when possible, ownership. Like Alban Maginness, I was at the launch today of a solar energy cooperative, which will be run very much for community benefit. I welcome the work of the Ulster Community Investment Trust (UCIT) and the Northern Ireland Community Energy (NICE) board on that project. I also declare an interest as a shareholder in Northern Ireland's first wind energy cooperative, Drumlin Wind Energy. Indeed, it was the first example in Northern Ireland of community ownership of energy, and I want people to avail themselves increasingly of such a model. Despite claims from the Member opposite and from such sources as the 'Daily Mail' and the 'The Daily Telegraph', wind energy is the cheapest form not only of renewable energy but of all forms of energy production. That was borne out by the EU Commission study, which, having looked at all the costs, including subsidies and external costs such as to health and the environment, found that, to generate 1 MW of energy by onshore wind cost roughly €105, compared with €164 for gas and €233 for coal. It is easy to state that wind energy is expensive — it does have upfront costs — but the unit cost is zero, and the life cycle of wind energy generation is cheaper than for other forms of energy. Indeed, the Enterprise, Trade and Investment Committee has heard, on numerous occasions, that, when demand for electricity can be met by renewable energy generation alone, the marginal cost is significantly lower than when gas comes onto the system. The reality is that the price of wind is coming down, and, whilst gas prices have dipped, the overall trend is upward. When we consider the costs of 500 deaths a year related to air pollution and the impacts of climate change, it is clear that the cost of other sources of energy such as gas and coal is significantly greater. Turning to the report, I think that I am right in saying that the Committee Chair expressed the support of the Committee for the proposal that wider economic, social and environmental impacts should not be taken into account when planning decisions are made on wind farms. I believe that this contradicts the Committee recommendation to take a strategic approach. Inevitably, these projects are regionally significant, and their wider impact must be taken into consideration, as for any major energy project. I do not believe that we would have Kilroot, Ballylumford or, going forward, the North/South interconnector if we looked solely at the local impact of an energy development. They are regionally significant, so we have to look more widely than the local impact. I certainly welcome further research into and monitoring of the noise impacts, but we need to take an evidence-based approach. The World Health Organization has said about imperceptible noise that there is no reliable evidence that sounds below the hearing threshold produce physiological or psychological effects. We should continue to monitor it, but we have to make decisions based on the evidence available. I find some of the opposition to wind projects hard —  [Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Beggs):](http://mmail.dods.co.uk/wf/click?upn=yeOVZorkTPgQPfchW6mXt-2FOGOKN3Sya492hdGBOwgt6ehWwPTHTn5cEP3N-2FrZ9GTOjSelBHSxOVAs7JwmNuSYl7VW0ufQ1C3zksqa5uKO7m3UFDdYIBKZexqNsUcyrXr_3YiO3g4OZ88zjwmUl85ryrr41X3s14Hz15ODy2H11NS8DcPOcmTja6F21jrN-2BZz4QLsDVAOUg-2BG-2FM48BXH7-2B1sH15euXI4U-2FRz3CkJ-2F7RuLzrt-2FIOQGo-2Fln6jOwhJPAoDEfKvhGbxlsGXfMOGN-2BYHjcsXpU1CJAvtmx-2FRitLQhhu6qSAGgz8OUcnm0OoSyg6bKIbcHgohkKsq5rLJvvEqv0wwGvRZlsxr3IwfiEXG5E-3D)  Will the Member draw his remarks to a close?  [Mr Agnew:](http://mmail.dods.co.uk/wf/click?upn=yeOVZorkTPgQPfchW6mXt-2FOGOKN3Sya492hdGBOwgt6ehWwPTHTn5cEP3N-2FrZ9GTDtpaolPe2Dk5Bdj-2BRQZlTEEH-2FAGb4-2FgB7O3y1TCqncPdFxbEgmsDBkWLd8lVSiqT_3YiO3g4OZ88zjwmUl85ryrr41X3s14Hz15ODy2H11NS8DcPOcmTja6F21jrN-2BZz4QLsDVAOUg-2BG-2FM48BXH7-2B1j1Yky0BJNSZivAkt9yWMyzXizfV-2BQfd0stDl9IBHnIuWkb2ep0nlHE1VEog2n-2Fhgv76w936yr0Qxzao6YFQm083MTxGWlilnQRQSaTSaKLqEmIy-2BzCnAck9FgWTs-2FusCTLP0DuKHu8KQFllB2CfSf0-3D)  — to understand. Those providing the objections support unregulated quarrying and gold-mining, but, when it comes to wind turbines, they seem to have an objection to the local impacts.  [Mr McNarry:](http://mmail.dods.co.uk/wf/click?upn=yeOVZorkTPgQPfchW6mXt-2FOGOKN3Sya492hdGBOwgt6ehWwPTHTn5cEP3N-2FrZ9GTtI89I9TcYfefQ0aKMMc0-2BoSEdCmCJJvEby3DOpEMGpdfHBV2RoTKwvgI7Y8-2F3Qhq_3YiO3g4OZ88zjwmUl85ryrr41X3s14Hz15ODy2H11NS8DcPOcmTja6F21jrN-2BZz4QLsDVAOUg-2BG-2FM48BXH7-2B1pHm5IUfyNFcVJpn5aLYbe-2BX-2Bgu5UoGkf-2Be-2F5fttyIGqVSv0ZCMFvEa86jSF06nJV-2Fos-2BOvVVe3oqzSys4gZtHTHTNKrZzp-2FyGjzhs-2BY4BHzaRX1n21lA3ogd-2Bz0JWmcUWw7CkU1pKCgy0-2BUtaN48Tc-3D)  Critics of wind power, like me, believe that granting planning permission for wind turbines has become little more than a rubber-stamping exercise. In some areas, approvals have hit 100%. In County Fermanagh, the county where fracking was outlawed by anoraks in green hats, 106 of 108 applications were given the green light. In the Omagh council area, 88 of 92 were approved. Through my recent research, I found that not one local council had a policy on wind farms — that augurs well for the new powers given to the super-councils, does it not? Yet we see these ghastly monsters mushrooming and destroying the lives of people who live near them. In the last three years, some £140 million has been paid out in subsidies to the renewables sector in Northern Ireland through the renewables obligation. These subsidies are profoundly regressive: they take money from poor consumers, including pensioners, to give to cash-rich cooperations. We are being asked to adopt a report that has strayed from legal disputes and potential judicial decisions, favouring the placement of turbines where they simply are not wanted. Owen McMullan, the spokesman of the Tyrone-based Windwatch group, puts it rather neatly:  "We were led to believe this would reduce our dependence on fossil fuels, but nobody in Northern Ireland is getting cheaper electricity."  That is true in all communities, just as it is in County Tyrone. Wind power has already exacted a heavy cost: it has caused divisions in rural communities and done nothing to decrease fuel bills. However, it has given rise to serious health concerns that require a moratorium until the true impacts on people's health are known. This turbine lobby is yet another example of the arrogance and shortsightedness of those intolerant, self-important people who have few or no ideas except massive cost initiatives that are not about green jobs but green unemployment. UKIP has consistently exposed the failures and the money wasted by plying it into wind energy. Rather than adopting this report to satisfy the tree-huggers, we should get the super-councils to ratify an across-the-country policy of stopping wind power development. In doing so, perhaps the Assembly should urgently address the potential of an energy supply crisis when it next talks so boldly of rebalancing our economy. The 'Sunday Telegraph', no later than February, dubbed the matter "The Great Wind Farm Farce". It said:  "In a free market, no business would want to invest in a wind farm because no customer would want to buy its unreliable produce."  Today, in our own local farce, we have a Committee recommending the sustainability of wind farms and, regrettably, offering little to give any real assurance to the people and communities directly affected by these monstrosities. The report recommends the sustainability of wind turbines, and, if it does not, the Committee should make it clear that that is its position.  If not, the recommendations are inadequate guidance for planning implications.  4.00 pm  I challenge anyone to deny that the recommendations are in favour of the sustainability of wind farms, and there ends the story. They are not recognising the rights of people, and they will, I believe, be subject to legal challenge. What of the 849 applications still out there awaiting decision? The recommendations do nothing to make a case to refuse them planning permission. Somehow, Members, I feel that the answer is still blowing in the wind. The Assembly should not be tilting at windmills.  [Mr Deputy Speaker (Mr Beggs):](http://mmail.dods.co.uk/wf/click?upn=yeOVZorkTPgQPfchW6mXt-2FOGOKN3Sya492hdGBOwgt6ehWwPTHTn5cEP3N-2FrZ9GTOjSelBHSxOVAs7JwmNuSYl7VW0ufQ1C3zksqa5uKO7m3UFDdYIBKZexqNsUcyrXr_3YiO3g4OZ88zjwmUl85ryrr41X3s14Hz15ODy2H11NS8DcPOcmTja6F21jrN-2BZz4QLsDVAOUg-2BG-2FM48BXH7-2B1ps7fElgvsbltrp3BwkpMqH4u2NYlMUF5iOqfM4eI4htCfhU51t9AVZrtQYinn33BYC-2Bdz6Wf5LR4ZLfLscekXhp47sJeFugL5j6kXjuVJbCZmxcAwi53LEqAXINrqTBTIT9Z6YpxcEXfpNc0E7oRpU-3D)  I call Paul Frew. The Member will have three minutes.  [Mr Frew:](http://mmail.dods.co.uk/wf/click?upn=yeOVZorkTPgQPfchW6mXt-2FOGOKN3Sya492hdGBOwgt6ehWwPTHTn5cEP3N-2FrZ9GTsVPmZPbrW7UkZtXw0NsfKQuT1K2ALW7cl5BYRUvMC4BsqjHqYJg56bPGZois0Z-2Fr_3YiO3g4OZ88zjwmUl85ryrr41X3s14Hz15ODy2H11NS8DcPOcmTja6F21jrN-2BZz4QLsDVAOUg-2BG-2FM48BXH7-2B1uF5Goxmc0302kMWh3F1iZxF-2FwC5ZDQYEOp4Dah3FdFSvJMwpk-2Fqr0yXXU0hs-2Bni-2Fbkz-2FM4dGikjrcLxbyqQiulzOK8Tk2CaBnxS7Fv4PN5TW1HTF-2Bfi1YYML-2BYZLT5NpjHd3bCbU7dDpUSftg6HwaE-3D)  I welcome the opportunity to speak on this important issue, which may even be more important than the debate around corporation tax and the tax-varying powers to decrease or increase the corporation tax rate. It is more important because electricity is the blood that runs through the veins of our industries. We cannot take this lightly, so I welcome the report but, alas, much like the three reports produced by the Enterprise, Trade and Investment Committee, it picks only one part of a massive subject, which is the cost of electricity. It is true that it is expensive to have wind power, but it is also true that we should have wind power. There is a place for wind power but not every place. I would like people to tell me what a saturation point looks like in a local area or a regional area, because I cannot see it and I do not know anyone who can tell me what it is. We need to get there because it is clear that wind power and wind generation will not solve all our ills. Rather than help, it will, in fact, hinder industry in this country.  (Mr Speaker in the Chair)  I will tell you why it will hinder industry in this country. Because of the system marginal price, we have to pay wind generators the same price as we pay for gas generators. That is the system marginal price. The more wind generators that go onto that system, the more we will have to pay. Not only that; we have to pay wind generators capacity payments for being there even though they are not always there and even though, sometimes, they cannot run. Sometimes, then, because of the state of our grid and because it cannot take their energy, we have to pay them constraint charges. That is the reason why we have to get this mix right. It is the reason why, at this moment, we are not getting it right, and that is why it is burdening industry and large employers. If we do not get this right, we could lose thousands of jobs. That is why this debate is far more important than any debate on corporation tax. The House needs to take the issue of energy costs seriously, or it will be to the detriment of our people, our employees and their children. That is how important the issue is to our people. Let us look at some of the issues that are at hand. I repeat: what is saturation point? When do we have enough? When do we have enough wind turbines, and when do we produce enough energy through wind? It is not about security of supply, because, if we had the North/South interconnector, we would have enough generation on the island of Ireland to cover security of supply. It is not about creating energy, so what is it about?  [Mr Speaker:](http://mmail.dods.co.uk/wf/click?upn=yeOVZorkTPgQPfchW6mXt-2FOGOKN3Sya492hdGBOwgt6ehWwPTHTn5cEP3N-2FrZ9GT0r8H5NThtbT8CNU-2BTi5FzN4DFTZbB3K6xdWhgc5crZI0vagO0PoCgYxXKdOcpG4o_3YiO3g4OZ88zjwmUl85ryrr41X3s14Hz15ODy2H11NS8DcPOcmTja6F21jrN-2BZz4QLsDVAOUg-2BG-2FM48BXH7-2B1sjjNPwFkTkEbF-2FTylir8D3no3kTI01IVTK730wHdlUCyn14Y-2BuJAcOUdPKPNWnmTPdEToamD7gd-2BJzyqv7Z9ZHkQU6YUGu2xpROqU1dI0WZwwXHqVvMPMVUXtcbrIsHYFlSDSnH7EU3wcJXLnHdMMI-3D)  I ask the Member to bring his remarks to an end.  [Mr Frew:](http://mmail.dods.co.uk/wf/click?upn=yeOVZorkTPgQPfchW6mXt-2FOGOKN3Sya492hdGBOwgt6ehWwPTHTn5cEP3N-2FrZ9GTsVPmZPbrW7UkZtXw0NsfKQuT1K2ALW7cl5BYRUvMC4BsqjHqYJg56bPGZois0Z-2Fr_3YiO3g4OZ88zjwmUl85ryrr41X3s14Hz15ODy2H11NS8DcPOcmTja6F21jrN-2BZz4QLsDVAOUg-2BG-2FM48BXH7-2B1vpgWdHAYGAXtbOA5Atsvi7faYUZt5W4G2IZDCtBw-2FaQZcTlfmEkKm7STTvT6ZZCu-2FOjthT3G4JWdzy-2B8hOySOXmd4WXIXcCSmytOFtZHNBS7g2psTdkrRT529IyCWpmE2JlfLsS7dae8zTPWrLJHCo-3D)  Thank you, Mr Speaker.  [Mr Speaker:](http://mmail.dods.co.uk/wf/click?upn=yeOVZorkTPgQPfchW6mXt-2FOGOKN3Sya492hdGBOwgt6ehWwPTHTn5cEP3N-2FrZ9GT0r8H5NThtbT8CNU-2BTi5FzN4DFTZbB3K6xdWhgc5crZI0vagO0PoCgYxXKdOcpG4o_3YiO3g4OZ88zjwmUl85ryrr41X3s14Hz15ODy2H11NS8DcPOcmTja6F21jrN-2BZz4QLsDVAOUg-2BG-2FM48BXH7-2B1pQUDYLa0zvReiREWTUw0EPxg5b9LkcYcA5ReO4-2BM5oj-2FleFTM7pUo8kL5tGEEGjwk9w5ZzZbZN2ooEtmZQ5f-2BXM1IrcL2GOTY-2FDSLRKztUsO30-2B9W63tEziYy5JeOY-2ByF0iQGL8DXgzBiI92KgMz0s-3D)  I call the Minister of the Environment, Mr Mark Durkan.  [Mr B McCrea:](http://mmail.dods.co.uk/wf/click?upn=yeOVZorkTPgQPfchW6mXt-2FOGOKN3Sya492hdGBOwgt6ehWwPTHTn5cEP3N-2FrZ9GTTe7orb5H9nB-2B4rpeL97Qnsi8kOe447qu39wGtWcKihEv-2FizW4NQNB-2FLpUn-2BiCKju_3YiO3g4OZ88zjwmUl85ryrr41X3s14Hz15ODy2H11NS8DcPOcmTja6F21jrN-2BZz4QLsDVAOUg-2BG-2FM48BXH7-2B1rX5CYg4Vc31nYuWSTf9hCTxbD7cX9xyCAIfRF1jr1AAUncN5rROrkH7LNIyad0d-2BL4SC6r1fg1e2uRsypWE5VDQbrhWU4Tfvx0T8T7CRqxosookWtsphtSL5MC48ehVVfJu-2BcHhpLj7iqHnv2pCSm8-3D)  On a point of order, Mr Speaker, under Standing Order 17(4). Will you inform the House what consultation you had with the Business Committee in order to establish the total time to be allocated to the debate? Having written to you and having much to contribute to the debate, I am extremely disappointed that I am the only Member not to be allowed to speak.  [Mr Speaker:](http://mmail.dods.co.uk/wf/click?upn=yeOVZorkTPgQPfchW6mXt-2FOGOKN3Sya492hdGBOwgt6ehWwPTHTn5cEP3N-2FrZ9GT0r8H5NThtbT8CNU-2BTi5FzN4DFTZbB3K6xdWhgc5crZI0vagO0PoCgYxXKdOcpG4o_3YiO3g4OZ88zjwmUl85ryrr41X3s14Hz15ODy2H11NS8DcPOcmTja6F21jrN-2BZz4QLsDVAOUg-2BG-2FM48BXH7-2B1v7pc8uKeaVPoyMmSki0z9lvS-2BQCBgGsHwiChMzVHRyP7RJfONvdG7-2BAOMQ-2BJ-2BypmBIUOhXKdMz68OYzj0L-2BV86yNvmaBy1Bna4mzyE3IM9owWQzPmpbZIoKCzOxxXGIBTXCXQxz1ctGxT-2F0YkRaA4E-3D)  I can understand the Member's frustration, but the Business Committee agreed the timings, as it does for all the business that comes to plenary session. They have the authority to do that, and their decision is reflected in the scope for Speakers to accommodate all those who wish to contribute. I have made a particular virtue of attempting to bring in members of the smaller parties and the independents as much as is possible and practical. However, in setting the time limits for a debate, there is a very clear calculation, by which by 4.02 pm we should have already called the Minister to make his contribution. I can only say that I share and understand the Member's disappointment, but the Business Committee's decision is the guidance that we all apply in the circumstances. I now return to the Minister.  [Mr B McCrea:](http://mmail.dods.co.uk/wf/click?upn=yeOVZorkTPgQPfchW6mXt-2FOGOKN3Sya492hdGBOwgt6ehWwPTHTn5cEP3N-2FrZ9GTTe7orb5H9nB-2B4rpeL97Qnsi8kOe447qu39wGtWcKihEv-2FizW4NQNB-2FLpUn-2BiCKju_3YiO3g4OZ88zjwmUl85ryrr41X3s14Hz15ODy2H11NS8DcPOcmTja6F21jrN-2BZz4QLsDVAOUg-2BG-2FM48BXH7-2B1gX3UGLIdViBjFsd5DBbrjM6LucH2WzfaHbY-2FVkgr0Uyzjvx0rTMGsOcnoJmyFeRkRF2sekg2En8YizsyQanyB-2FZWvAZSaFripTZHm1dz7ir9QuRkfLvADyn8IXqTY73ygJAmTRD0gbQWOYMuRHOOtY-3D)  Further to that point of order, Mr Speaker. Under Standing Order 17(5), if I may —  [Mr Speaker:](http://mmail.dods.co.uk/wf/click?upn=yeOVZorkTPgQPfchW6mXt-2FOGOKN3Sya492hdGBOwgt6ehWwPTHTn5cEP3N-2FrZ9GT0r8H5NThtbT8CNU-2BTi5FzN4DFTZbB3K6xdWhgc5crZI0vagO0PoCgYxXKdOcpG4o_3YiO3g4OZ88zjwmUl85ryrr41X3s14Hz15ODy2H11NS8DcPOcmTja6F21jrN-2BZz4QLsDVAOUg-2BG-2FM48BXH7-2B1sb1iGsU20YcNrCaJ174GX3vKZ3DP6iuMfZ6Bs2yYSjnTajMk-2B6JmN9lXLRqT4FbCZJeRVrGEsxYPWZhJCYIdTC3qWrnoJaz0tA4Pt857ky0FQaAi54DNmssJf8CzF3WV6Inb0-2BmD-2B1yrokXigcwIKs-3D)  I think that I have given you a fairly comprehensive explanation. What I suggest, so that we do not end up in a challenge, is that I have to conduct the business of the meeting as determined by the Business Committee. Everyone should have a clear understanding that that in fact is how the Assembly has decided to go about its business. I will reflect on the point that you made and will come back to you if you wish to have a formal response. I have given you my understanding of it, and I will come back to you. I owe you that much. I am sorry that you did not get called to speak, but I think that you would also be the first to acknowledge that we try to involve smaller parties, independents and individuals as well as the bigger parties as much as is practical. Can I now proceed with the debate? I will come back to you. Mark Durkan.  [Mr Durkan (The Minister of the Environment):](http://mmail.dods.co.uk/wf/click?upn=yeOVZorkTPgQPfchW6mXt-2FOGOKN3Sya492hdGBOwgt6ehWwPTHTn5cEP3N-2FrZ9GTdqd-2BYmnkAwcWo0pwB2Au04YKyERk8xH-2BA0IbFvgwJX5uzi3B3yKg8gZ4MldhR33i_3YiO3g4OZ88zjwmUl85ryrr41X3s14Hz15ODy2H11NS8DcPOcmTja6F21jrN-2BZz4QLsDVAOUg-2BG-2FM48BXH7-2B1lyTKe36JsA3FG-2Bl2xreASUud49ULb-2FkbwAoz9X-2BYo5r86nG-2F-2Bqt1DTju-2FLzqWbf7-2FLIQip8sgWfj4btak-2Ba3Y5rFbHpetb8vJUJukMd96nBeojECcumrjbE-2FpOxG9wGBbM3vu9BC7ypKjnAx0G5C9U-3D)  Go raibh maith agat, a Cheann Comhairle. I have been allocated 15 minutes; I would happily give Basil five or 15. I begin by thanking Anna Lo, Chairperson of the Environment Committee, for proposing the motion. I also acknowledge the work of the Committee, its research team and all those who provided evidence during the wind energy inquiry. This very useful report is evidently the product of an extensive and thorough inquiry process that is to be commended. I am also grateful to Members for their contributions today. I welcome the Committee’s report and, although I have only recently seen it, I am content to consider further and address the Committee’s recommendations that fall within my Department’s remit, subject to normal due processes. I will return to those recommendations later, but I first wish to say a little about renewable energy development in Northern Ireland. Northern Ireland has significant renewable energy resources and a vibrant renewable energy industry that makes an important contribution to achieving sustainable development and is a valuable provider of jobs and investment across the region. Making appropriate use of renewable energy sources is supported by wider government policy, including the regional development strategy 2035. I turn to an issue raised earlier by Mr Wilson. DETI’s strategic energy framework for Northern Ireland sets a target of 40% energy consumption from renewable sources by 2020, which is equivalent to 1,600 megawatts of energy. To date, DOE has consented in excess of 1,100 megawatts from wind farms alone. With five years to go and if all consented proposals are developed, that represents a significant contribution to the 40% target, which would be further supplemented by other forms of renewable energy development. Northern Ireland produces in the region of 19·6% of energy requirements from renewable sources, the majority from wind energy. Existing planning policy for that form of development is set out in Planning Policy Statement 18 on renewable energy — PPS 18 — which is supported by its supplementary best practice guidance. Following the publication of PPS 18 in August 2009, my Department experienced a significant increase in planning applications for wind energy. For the period 2002-03 until the end of 2014, 89% of planning applications for wind energy development were approved. I am aware of the strong and contrasting views — we heard some of them today — on renewable energy development. Indeed, they have been reflected here today and through the responses received following the public consultation on the draft SPPS. I recognise, going forward, that it is important that the right balance is struck between facilitating development in appropriate locations to meet renewable energy targets and protecting the exceptional quality of our natural environment. These are matters and issues that I am addressing in finalising the SPPS. As Members will be aware, the SPPS is a radical new approach to preparing regional planning policy. It will result in a shorter, simpler and more strategic policy framework for all users of the planning system. I will shortly bring the final SPPS before the Executive in time for the transfer of planning powers to councils next month. Returning to the wind energy report, I would like to address some of its recommendations and some of the comments made today. The recommendations set out in the report are wide-ranging and complex, and several will require further examination. However, where appropriate, I have been able to address some of the recommendations in the final SPPS. For example, the Chair of the Committee, Ms Lo, referred to the importance of properly defining how economic considerations are dealt with in determining planning applications. I deal with that in the final SPPS by setting out further detail on how economic considerations can and should be taken into account. Ms Lo and Mr Boylan also raised the importance of effective community engagement, which also features in the report. I agree wholeheartedly, and it is an essential part of the new reformed planning system. The final SPPS will also advise on those issues, including pre-application community consultation and the minimum requirements to be placed on a prospective applicant in relation to consultation with the community for major and regionally significant applications. Another issue that was raised is the importance of safeguarding our sensitive landscapes. I will ensure that the final SPPS brings forward a cautious approach to renewable energy developments in designated landscapes. Other report recommendations can be taken forward through forthcoming renewable energy guidance that I intend to have in place in time for the transfer of planning powers to councils. For example, the guidance will help to address recommendations on community engagement, the liaison between my Department and councils on wind energy development, information to be submitted with renewable energy applications, assessing cumulative impact and the use of appropriate conditions when considering such developments. As I recognised earlier, there is more work to be done. Further recommendations are likely to require additional research, policy development and public consultation. For example, several Members emphasised the need to review separation distances between wind farms or turbines and occupied properties, both from an amenity and a safety perspective. I agree that that needs further urgent consideration. I, too, was shocked and concerned about the recent collapse of the wind turbine in County Tyrone. I will ensure that any implications for my Department's renewable energy policy are fully addressed. The Chair of the Committee, along with Lord Morrow and others, raised concerns that are also addressed in the Committee's report about the use of the ETSU-R-97 guidance. While I recognise that ETSU is currently the established UK-wide standard, having read the report and listened to the views expressed today, I am minded to investigate further the use of ETSU in Northern Ireland. I do not think I would go so far as to describe it as idiotic, as Mr Frew did, but it certainly warrants further investigation. There are, however, recommendations that fall outside the responsibility of my Department and may require consideration by other Departments and bodies. For example, there are recommendations in relation to community benefits, which is an important issue that was highlighted by Lord Morrow. Lord Morrow also raised the issue of the potential for property values to drop as a result of nearby wind energy development. The Committee report recommends that the developer gives consideration to providing compensation where there is clear and compelling evidence of that. While this is outwith the remit of my Department, I support that recommendation.  4.15 pm  There were some other interesting points raised by Members throughout the debate. Ms Lo referred to the transfer to councils of planning and responsibility for the vast majority of wind energy applications. We will all be interested to see how councils deal with the metamorphosis that they are undergoing from poacher to gamekeeper and how that might influence some of the very vociferously expressed views that they have had on wind energy to date. There is more to be done on the economic considerations. I have touched on that and vowed to bring forward more detail on it. A point was also raised about the inadequacies of the current planning policy. Like beauty, inadequacy is in the eye of the beholder. If policy and systems do not give you the outcome that you want, they will be viewed as inadequate.  [Mr Wilson:](http://mmail.dods.co.uk/wf/click?upn=yeOVZorkTPgQPfchW6mXt-2FOGOKN3Sya492hdGBOwgt6ehWwPTHTn5cEP3N-2FrZ9GTf1gzrspxUx0yMxJG92eS8fQ3dPNE9Rd-2F1QBK-2F3fVOwSzC91fHIkrMt6cEPxabe2x_3YiO3g4OZ88zjwmUl85ryrr41X3s14Hz15ODy2H11NS8DcPOcmTja6F21jrN-2BZz4QLsDVAOUg-2BG-2FM48BXH7-2B1q8feev7aUfcgpJWjTavkzakBnZas6baXFqDj4Laab8iptyeFSwPwfDoolJ0tLhZ81CEX3HGV8YAWA03tnqBFdlvHQfblgdiRFohMU4gW7XVJF8UpfG5bX-2FZu5b7PHegBRSbNMKCbw9zT30-2BNGR8UAQ-3D)  Will the Minister give way?  [Mr Durkan:](http://mmail.dods.co.uk/wf/click?upn=yeOVZorkTPgQPfchW6mXt-2FOGOKN3Sya492hdGBOwgt6ehWwPTHTn5cEP3N-2FrZ9GTdqd-2BYmnkAwcWo0pwB2Au04YKyERk8xH-2BA0IbFvgwJX5uzi3B3yKg8gZ4MldhR33i_3YiO3g4OZ88zjwmUl85ryrr41X3s14Hz15ODy2H11NS8DcPOcmTja6F21jrN-2BZz4QLsDVAOUg-2BG-2FM48BXH7-2B1pQpB6nUVWltPl3be1HV67ppQEQGED8Lich7YVBn6nZgyzWfajTVOQCoq3yfpZw-2BYDphn4eb-2BLkd7jKlpmymkGq5NhQO1Ksw0J86EQoyv23KiCN9jb12VasBYkJwMBzBKHh9IFIdGsNsIF2pblDha5c-3D)  Yes, I will give way.  [Mr Wilson:](http://mmail.dods.co.uk/wf/click?upn=yeOVZorkTPgQPfchW6mXt-2FOGOKN3Sya492hdGBOwgt6ehWwPTHTn5cEP3N-2FrZ9GTf1gzrspxUx0yMxJG92eS8fQ3dPNE9Rd-2F1QBK-2F3fVOwSzC91fHIkrMt6cEPxabe2x_3YiO3g4OZ88zjwmUl85ryrr41X3s14Hz15ODy2H11NS8DcPOcmTja6F21jrN-2BZz4QLsDVAOUg-2BG-2FM48BXH7-2B1l6fDf-2BSrtf8zJ5DG3S1zFq0z7M4mAEVF7Qy8RaTmeTStT-2FtGHzBKYczn4M6in8J214RKqqPl9um8dpWp8EnDyMvTDAzalV2HW325zWVDB6CTrwFB8h9JNqFHZBil2ePdvdjaIE58TbTK4AcRNpV8yQ-3D)  When the Minister is bringing forward recommendations on the economic implications, will he include in those the negative economic impact that wind turbines can have on not only individual households and property values but the cost of electricity in Northern Ireland and the fact that the more of these that go up, the greater the costs to consumers because of the subsidies that have to be paid for them?  [Mr Durkan:](http://mmail.dods.co.uk/wf/click?upn=yeOVZorkTPgQPfchW6mXt-2FOGOKN3Sya492hdGBOwgt6ehWwPTHTn5cEP3N-2FrZ9GTdqd-2BYmnkAwcWo0pwB2Au04YKyERk8xH-2BA0IbFvgwJX5uzi3B3yKg8gZ4MldhR33i_3YiO3g4OZ88zjwmUl85ryrr41X3s14Hz15ODy2H11NS8DcPOcmTja6F21jrN-2BZz4QLsDVAOUg-2BG-2FM48BXH7-2B1tW2BRYuMYV7drHPsg4Z4nyAIrFDG2Y5J3u8W4giK2CEksVATMlOCV3WpcoICRwp5vTWk7cFM0Jc-2FdbeyVdPlMXTECKPiIs285VtZkP5uwwyk4paVgKP2T5zlKeq6u9cFpQCJcMI4QyrYxZPmKEyNNk-3D)  I thank the Member for his intervention. Anything that I bring forward will be balanced. However, I am not sure that it will reflect the concerns that the Member has expressed there. It will consider them, but it will be balanced, and I am not sure what side it will come down on. I have acknowledged and do acknowledge that improvements can and should be made to PPS 18. While we have placed a lot of stock in the SPPS, it is more of a vehicle to consolidate existing policy. I have used the opportunity to improve policy in some regards. However, I can give a commitment to the House that this policy and some others that might require further or more serious surgery, shall we say, will be reviewed in full, subsequent to the transfer of planning to councils. Lord Morrow spoke about the four main considerations —  [Mr G Robinson:](http://mmail.dods.co.uk/wf/click?upn=yeOVZorkTPgQPfchW6mXt-2FOGOKN3Sya492hdGBOwgt6ehWwPTHTn5cEP3N-2FrZ9GTEuOCsIawpfyKEgQAkiJqWFz0RIhp3OSBVO7UuaHWs1sr0EyCZZdkigUIEwXw0nBt_3YiO3g4OZ88zjwmUl85ryrr41X3s14Hz15ODy2H11NS8DcPOcmTja6F21jrN-2BZz4QLsDVAOUg-2BG-2FM48BXH7-2B1ia4WQYi7hKSZmN7OUcQ1qi3ipifT69OHmv4K7qMZEK7FMi4nbppP-2B6lCAnTGih3CM8hCpheVi7nxj2QQ1NT0YHi9fj5pOZNDWRWyifg-2BoDVfl4oP9baELvOz36QE9OZSpRJK0lTbvIvQY6A5H9-2F7FI-3D)  Will the Minister give way?  [Mr Durkan:](http://mmail.dods.co.uk/wf/click?upn=yeOVZorkTPgQPfchW6mXt-2FOGOKN3Sya492hdGBOwgt6ehWwPTHTn5cEP3N-2FrZ9GTdqd-2BYmnkAwcWo0pwB2Au04YKyERk8xH-2BA0IbFvgwJX5uzi3B3yKg8gZ4MldhR33i_3YiO3g4OZ88zjwmUl85ryrr41X3s14Hz15ODy2H11NS8DcPOcmTja6F21jrN-2BZz4QLsDVAOUg-2BG-2FM48BXH7-2B1q124fvZf-2FQhQ2YkJnu1HssOSEkrCerb9x0gzGIL-2FS491Y2IhwjpR7S82sLlUFe7xrC6X3zw-2FhJywRkqre3LR6P8HQxwk7AP-2FA-2BOT0-2FMCe6fq79al2-2FpxORWLrBeRQsBhmCRy0BTHxY4BdVnTXfiogk-3D)  I will see how I get on and maybe let you in during my last minute, thank you. Lord Morrow spoke of the four major considerations throughout the drawing up of this report. We have touched on safety. There is still a debate about the noise. Is there noise? Is there not noise? How much of an impact might the noise have on individuals? How much of an annoyance might it cause to households? I suppose that it would be difficult to be subjected to a constant drone for hours on end; I am sure that the Speaker could sympathise with that. I have touched on the impact on property values and, indeed, the landscape impact. According to Lord Morrow, people are a bit sceptical. He called for a more strategic approach to dealing with wind energy applications. Cathal Boylan raised some interesting points as well. Alban Maginness said that we should celebrate and, indeed, exploit the renewable energy sources at our disposal. This will boost not only our environment but our economy. He spoke of the community involvement, as did Mr Agnew, and referred to the project in Slaughtneil, which is a tangible example of how community benefit can and should work. Mrs Overend, too, made some very interesting points, particularly in expressing the view that this subject causes division and polarises communities. It is strange to have a case where you have not just Nimbyism but "Imbyism". There are people who do not want them in their backyard, and there are others complaining that they are not in their backyard and someone else is getting the economic benefit of hosting a turbine. Mr Wilson went on his anti-triffid rant, and I would love to ask him what he did in the war against the triffids.  [Laughter.]  [Mr A Maginness:](http://mmail.dods.co.uk/wf/click?upn=yeOVZorkTPgQPfchW6mXt-2FOGOKN3Sya492hdGBOwgt6ehWwPTHTn5cEP3N-2FrZ9GT6UMuPZabPsWaHtUFv0nDJYy3y5h0tK87XTF2EkqIJ-2F1PIWSJ890vGlgDrj27cXrK_3YiO3g4OZ88zjwmUl85ryrr41X3s14Hz15ODy2H11NS8DcPOcmTja6F21jrN-2BZz4QLsDVAOUg-2BG-2FM48BXH7-2B1h6hPU2xrru0dChnefjeuvASOkn6FiltQ0a1ZKjOLYrFwcFVvN-2FdWRZOV8w-2BW-2BLkk7d1AbnLlLenXNYyKRAybqTPuURW20jG6V3RxM230WPlJIqFnkGpyEnr5-2F6aCwqaLlRU-2FVL0OuCwwF0TCgFVDjY-3D)  He survived.  [Mr Durkan:](http://mmail.dods.co.uk/wf/click?upn=yeOVZorkTPgQPfchW6mXt-2FOGOKN3Sya492hdGBOwgt6ehWwPTHTn5cEP3N-2FrZ9GTdqd-2BYmnkAwcWo0pwB2Au04YKyERk8xH-2BA0IbFvgwJX5uzi3B3yKg8gZ4MldhR33i_3YiO3g4OZ88zjwmUl85ryrr41X3s14Hz15ODy2H11NS8DcPOcmTja6F21jrN-2BZz4QLsDVAOUg-2BG-2FM48BXH7-2B1k2Zy3HpB34K-2BWImraKRI7252Cr112MDihNC9hcoYRaSf-2FV4SXPVvJSA-2FGIXvHfUawGIes8p6Jv77mYx6cbMKB8AewyaW-2FBL5PIPeoudaK-2FIYp5Q8Fx1HXFAdJz8vP79by3rl3eMStD-2BHrmGNQ761uM-3D)  He said that he came under fire because the policy was too draconian. The policy has not changed, as he quite rightly pointed out. He was also right in what he said about subjectivity. I have to correct Mr Maginness on his point about the cumulative impact. The cumulative impact of wind turbines and wind farms is a material consideration when it comes to processing a wind energy application. Barry McElduff spoke about our meeting yesterday, which was very productive. In some respects, I regret the timing of the report, in that it has come so close to the publication of the SPPS. However, the SPPS is not a catch-all, and we will have the opportunity to address some of the more serious or deep issues through a full review. One of Mr McElduff's other pet favourites is PPS 21. He spoke about separation distances and the need to increase separation distances for wind turbines, but I do not think that we would have any chance of meeting any separation distances, because he would have a house in every field. He lamented the over-reliance on wind energy and the underutilisation of other renewable sources of energy, so I look forward to his and his party colleagues' support for applications for solar farms and anaerobic digesters as they come forward. As I said, I welcome the Committee’s report into wind energy. Whilst I have only recently seen the report, I am content to consider further and address the Committee’s recommendations that fall within my Department’s remit, subject to normal due processes.  [Mrs Cameron:](http://mmail.dods.co.uk/wf/click?upn=yeOVZorkTPgQPfchW6mXt-2FOGOKN3Sya492hdGBOwgt6ehWwPTHTn5cEP3N-2FrZ9GT5-2B-2Fs8ytPzcSwdBkqWC6ryhtEytaggtIAXnC2SRtmZCEJOs5CoD-2B6D-2Fs1rlmthE-2Fl_3YiO3g4OZ88zjwmUl85ryrr41X3s14Hz15ODy2H11NS8DcPOcmTja6F21jrN-2BZz4QLsDVAOUg-2BG-2FM48BXH7-2B1o60dpl1113lUyPcrwMyxO-2FL7-2B9iD-2BvRG4waXAygMtkqi2KsEEdJo1GCZk0HxpqcmZ9dzTugsf-2B1SP2poEV-2FiJ-2BZkiz9gJteltlUHXD9UECl2bp2EbJYhqs1Fml6OeBdPi0vKXxcv3Ng-2B3pcerVcQ7U-3D)  On behalf of the Committee for the Environment, I support the motion that the Assembly approves the report of the Committee on its inquiry into wind energy in Northern Ireland and calls on the Minister of the Environment to implement the report's recommendations. The Committee is fully mindful and supportive of the requirement to promote renewable energy and to meet the Executive’s Programme for Government target for 2011-15, which includes a commitment to achieve 20% of electricity consumption from renewable sources by 2015. However, the inquiry arose in response to the concerns of local residents who have questioned the way in which that target is being achieved through what they believe to be an over-reliance on wind energy. The inquiry proved to be an immense piece of work, not just in the scope and volume of evidence that was considered but in the emotive nature of much of that evidence. I believe that the Committee has managed to produce a fair and balanced report, with robust and perhaps challenging recommendations. Overall, the Committee concluded that the way forward for sustainable as well as renewable energy is one that fully engages those communities that are most closely involved with its production. That is very much reflected in the Committee’s recommendations, which call on the Department and wind energy developers to work with communities — to inform, to communicate and to respond — at every level of planning and operation. I take the opportunity to thank all those who contributed to the debate. Obviously, we first had the Chair, who spoke at length in moving the motion to accept the report. She said that the Committee had received 98 submissions in response to its call for evidence. The Committee also had oral evidence sessions with a range of stakeholders and commissioned the services of a specialist acoustician to assist it with the technical aspects of the inquiry. We also heard that the Committee carried out a fact-finding visit to west Tyrone to see a wind farm development at first hand and to hear from the residents who lived close to the turbines. The Committee agreed that there was a need for a strategic approach in the siting of wind energy developments. It also considered whether a strategic approach that advocated zoning or the identification of the most appropriate location for wind turbines would be effective. However, as we all know, it was agreed that it is now too late for the introduction of zoning in Northern Ireland as many areas —  [Mr Frew:](http://mmail.dods.co.uk/wf/click?upn=yeOVZorkTPgQPfchW6mXt-2FOGOKN3Sya492hdGBOwgt6ehWwPTHTn5cEP3N-2FrZ9GTsVPmZPbrW7UkZtXw0NsfKQuT1K2ALW7cl5BYRUvMC4BsqjHqYJg56bPGZois0Z-2Fr_3YiO3g4OZ88zjwmUl85ryrr41X3s14Hz15ODy2H11NS8DcPOcmTja6F21jrN-2BZz4QLsDVAOUg-2BG-2FM48BXH7-2B1vqPRO2T9EveelrC4Idi2mQt7VPJi5aWrCxToHa7s1bHoVYgpdcdn2pqW3SQghCqXvWADZxz8zhTk48JB6lYN56EBrGE6vG8IBcAsSH-2Fh64Fq5WA8ZTRqbql6UYkd1LKj4AQQerWmWASgrVrZib3lf4-3D)  I thank the Member for giving way. Whilst it would be hard to put in a strategic regional scheme or plan, NIE does produce heat maps. If the heat maps were more detailed, they would be able to show developers where the grid is strong and where it is weak. Generators could target those areas and identify whether any of that land was available, instead of what happens now, which is that they go to any available land and try their hand at getting planning permission.  [Mrs Cameron:](http://mmail.dods.co.uk/wf/click?upn=yeOVZorkTPgQPfchW6mXt-2FOGOKN3Sya492hdGBOwgt6ehWwPTHTn5cEP3N-2FrZ9GT5-2B-2Fs8ytPzcSwdBkqWC6ryhtEytaggtIAXnC2SRtmZCEJOs5CoD-2B6D-2Fs1rlmthE-2Fl_3YiO3g4OZ88zjwmUl85ryrr41X3s14Hz15ODy2H11NS8DcPOcmTja6F21jrN-2BZz4QLsDVAOUg-2BG-2FM48BXH7-2B1jyUyBM97dSt-2BK1oKqkkui-2Fw5wLHi6zwdLYx6l18GmPpRn4j4et5eXi6KZQ9uds0FWPabKPDmn-2BTPbm8FuomXWB-2Fq3QN2Z96P8jIR7SGi0hq504wCRLgks8vveIywAGHwmwaiHA2a9J2CVrwkCTvDjY-3D)  I thank the Member for his intervention. I am sure that the Minister will take those points on board as he looks into the report further. As I said, in certain places like west Tyrone, the number of operational or planned wind developments has reached saturation point. The Committee identified a clear need for closer liaison between the strategic planning division and councils to ensure a joined-up approach and more cohesive planning for wind farms and individual turbines. The Committee also expressed some concern that the term "economic considerations", which is used in PPS 18 and retained in the draft SPPS, is not clearly defined. The Committee urges the Department to do so. The Committee found that many submissions to the inquiry focused on perceived inadequacies in the current planning procedures and the cumulative impact of turbines. It recommended that planning applications for connection to the grid be assessed at the same time as turbine applications, which is, I think, a common-sense approach. The Committee believes that the requirement to notify neighbours who occupy buildings on land within 90 metres of the boundary of the application site is inadequate for the latest wind turbines, which may exceed a great height. The Chair talked about the inquiry's second term of reference, which focused on wind turbine noise and separation distances from dwellings. This was a very emotive part of the inquiry, as many submissions dealt with the adverse impact of perceived noise from wind turbines on respondents' day-to-day lives. It seems that the current guidelines on permissible levels of noise are no longer adequate. The Committee therefore recommended that the Department urgently review the use of the ETSU-R-97 guidelines with a view to adopting more modern and robust guidance for the measurement of wind turbine noise. The Committee also recommended that the Department specify a minimum separation distance between wind turbines and dwellings. The inquiry's final term of reference, as the Chair informed us, related to the extent of engagement by wind energy providers with communities. Community concerns about visual amenity, noise and health did not always seem to be given due regard. The views of residents need to be listened to, considered and taken into account. The Committee talked about the mandatory use of the community engagement toolkit and recommended that the level of community benefit be set at government level. It recommended that this be made a condition of planning permission and that a community-benefits register similar to the one in Scotland be set up. That sums up the Chair's remarks. I will turn now to other Members. Lord Morrow raised concerns about the impacts of wind turbines: the noise, safety, the effect on property values and the detrimental impact on the landscape. He noted that many remain to be convinced of the benefits of wind energy and that there was a mood for a more strategic approach to be taken to planning. Cathal Boylan was in favour of the recommendations in the report but concerned about the use of reconditioned turbines. He stated that ETSU-R-97 was unfit for purpose and needed to be reviewed. He said that there needs to be more effective engagement with communities. Alban Maginness said that it was important to note the contribution made by wind energy and that, over time, its cost will decrease. He was impressed by the efforts made by those building wind turbines with the community, and he said that engagement with communities was essential. Sandra Overend welcomed the report's seeking to bring some clarity to this issue. She said that there is a need for an overarching strategic approach to the siting of turbines. She was concerned about noise pollution and distance from residential properties, and she wanted the Department to improve its methods of measuring noise pollution. Sammy Wilson said that there was increasing alarm in Northern Ireland about the impact of wind turbines. He also welcomed the report. He stated that planning policy is often influenced by the guidance from the Minister's office. He also welcomed the recommendation that those putting up wind turbines be responsible for ensuring that they meet standards. He said that the guidance on noise levels needed to be updated and stated that the cumulative impact of wind turbines on an area needed to be taken into account.  4.30 pm  Barry McElduff supported the recommendations in the report. He supports the Programme for Government targets but has concerns about the over-reliance on wind energy. He was concerned about separation distances, the cumulative impact of wind turbines and the displacement of jobs and tourism. He also said that the ETSU-R-97 guidelines need to be reviewed. Steven Agnew welcomed the Committee focus on wind energy. He called for community involvement in projects. He stated that wind energy is the cheapest form of energy production and that the price of wind energy is coming down while other sources of energy are increasing in cost. He also said that there is a need to look strategically at energy production. David McNarry believes that the planning approval for wind turbines is a rubber-stamping exercise. He said that £140 million has been paid in subsidies to wind energy producers. He said that wind energy is not producing cheaper electricity, and he was concerned about the health implications of wind turbines. He also said that there should be a halt to wind turbine development. The last contributor was Paul Frew, who welcomed the report. He said that the report addressed only one part of the cost of electricity and that wind power will not help industry. He stated that wind generators are paid the same as gas generators and that wind power generators have to be paid capacity payments. He also said that the cost of generating energy needs to be taken seriously. In conclusion, I ask the Assembly to approve the report. At this stage, I thank the Minister for his initial response and look forward to a more detailed response in due course. It is also appropriate at this stage to thank the Committee staff for their hard work in the production of the report and for all their help throughout the inquiry, which turned out to be quite a large inquiry, with a great deal of work for the Committee staff. In particular, I thank Sheila Mawhinney, the Committee Clerk, for the tremendous work that she has put into it.  Question put and agreed to.Resolved:  That this Assembly approves the report of the Committee for the Environment [NIA 226/11-16] on its Inquiry into Wind Energy in Northern Ireland; and calls on the Minister of the Environment to implement the recommendations contained in the report. | | | |