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**Minutes of meeting of Northern Ireland Authority for Energy Regulation**

**29 January 2004**

At this meeting there were several presentations by the following:

Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment on Emissions Trading;

Concern was expressed that Northern Ireland did not appear to have been given as generous an allocation as Great Britain. It was agreed that DEFRA=s mechanism for arriving at these allocations needed to be more transparent and that an explanation would be sought. It was noted that the NI situation was unique in that NI was only marginally connected to the national grid and would not therefore be able to be a beneficiary of the effect of carbon trading in progressively improving the quality of UK generation.

Shell on the Current Status of Irish Offshore Oil and Gas Exploration;

It was noted that the current Irish sources of gas were Kinsale/Ballycotton and Seven Heads. Gas had also been found at Corrib and exploration had taken place at Dooish. It was noted that gas consumption in Europe was rising and that supply was shifting to more distant areas such as the former Soviet Union, Central Asia and North Africa and that development of multiple supply sources of indigenous gas should be encouraged.

NEA on Fuel Poverty Issues

This presentation highlighted the fact that fuel poverty figures in Northern Ireland compared unfavourably to other areas of the United Kingdom; 33% of NI households were in fuel poverty, compared to 9% in England and 17% in Scotland. The main conclusions from the data outlined in the presentation were that there were homes that had a standard package of insulation and energy efficient heating that were fuel poor and that income and fuel price played an important role in creating fuel poor households.

Authority Members felt that much could be done to alleviate fuel poverty such as the installation of condensing gas boilers; regulation of the oil industry; topping up of roof space insulation to a greater depth in homes; ensuring that households knew the type of help that was available; stricter building control regulations; and ensuring that full benefits were being achieved from the Energy Efficiency Levy.

Weber Shandwick, the Authority’s PR Company on developing the right communication strategy for the Authority.

The rest of the meeting concentrated on the following:

Renewables and the Supply Price Control;
BGE Licence;
Re-Negotiation of Phoenix Gas Licence;
SNIP Mutualisation;
All Island Issues: Progress on Joint Steering Group;
Audit Committee Business;
Government Support for Electricity Industry; and
Possible Relocation of Ofreg.

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