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Dear Danny,

### **Sustainability in Energy Supplies: A '2020 Vision' for Renewable Energy**

Thank you for giving DARD an opportunity to respond to the preliminary consultation paper '*Sustainability in Energy Supplies in an All-Island Energy Market*'. DARD strongly supports the work that has been undertaken and agrees with the way forward set out in the main paper. A number of the issues raised in the paper relating to agriculture and rural development are dealt with in recommendations for a DARD renewable energy policy produced by a cross-departmental group on renewables. Consequently, in considering our response, reference should be made to the recommendations paper for DARD, shortly to be issued for public consultation.

In the overview paper, '*Sustainability in Energy Supplies*', we are pleased to see reference to the fact that 'some excellent science and research is underway.' We agree for the need to capture and enhance the benefits that can flow from energy research and innovation and support the work that has commenced to improve energy research, development and demonstration. Indeed, we feel the Interreg funded project on energy from biomass being undertaken by DARD Science Service and Rural Generation Ltd. is a good example of an integrated research, development and extension programme, which could act as a model for further developments in this area. DARD would like to be involved in discussions on setting the research agenda on energy issues and highlight the need for linkages with GB and other EU Member States. The forthcoming Biomass Taskforce report (England and Wales) to be published by Defra is likely to highlight the need for co-ordination of R&D effort from all those involved to ensure value for money and avoid duplication.

A diverse portfolio of relatively small-scale generators embedded into the distribution network offers a sound model for the successful development of the energy industry, though larger scale projects will also have a part to play. This approach best addresses the range of renewable energy related policy goals including climate change mitigation, improving air and water quality, rural development, and increasing fuel diversity. Prioritising these drivers for renewable energy is difficult due to the interrelationships which exist. Indeed we feel that the most important issue is that due recognition is given to the potential multifunctional roles of some renewable energy sources, for example, the potential bioremediation role for energy crops in the sustainable management of biological, municipal, industrial and farm wastes. Given this, DARD considers it most efficient if renewable energy issues are fully integrated into policies relating to waste, agriculture and the environment. This approach has been taken by the cross-departmental group which developed recommendations for a DARD policy on renewables.

In setting out the future work programme and deliverables, consideration should be given to the establishment of a multidisciplinary team of leading researchers to carry out regular reviews of developments of all aspects of renewable energy on an all-island basis. This group could provide timely information on which policy and future strategy could be based.

Finally, we are pleased to note that similar exercises are planned looking at the sustainability of heat supply and combined heat and power on an all-island basis. In the period up to 2020, there is great potential for the development of renewable heat supply. Given that heating consumes approximately one third of the primary fossil energy supply, developments in policy and support in this area are crucial.

Yours sincerely

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