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# Written Ministerial Statement

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## Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister

### **Executive Response to the Independent Review of the Dioxin Incident**

*Published on Friday 18 March 2011*

**The First Minister and the deputy First Minister (Mr P Robinson and Mr M McGuinness):** We wish to inform Assembly Members of the Executive's response to the "Independent Review of the Dioxin Incident in Northern Ireland, December 2008".

The Independent Review, undertaken by Mr Kenneth J MacKenzie CB, was published on 13 September 2010. The Review set out a number of recommendations which the relevant Ministers and key stakeholders have now considered in detail. The response to the Review was considered by the Executive at its meeting on 10 March 2011.

The Executive noted the broad welcome for Mr MacKenzie's Report and a shared sense that he had consulted widely and reflected the views expressed by all parties in a balanced way so that the lessons could be learned and procedures improved, where necessary.

A significant amount has been learnt from the dioxin incident and considerable work has taken place by the relevant Departments and the Food Standards Agency over the last two years to put this learning into practice.

The Executive accepted 16 of the 17 recommendations in the Report in full. One recommendation, number 16, has been accepted in part because it would be for the Food and Feed Incident Management Group (rather than OFMDFM) to ensure that the emergency plans and communication protocols are developed and fully rehearsed.

In considering its response to the Report, the Executive emphasised the importance of effective cross-organisational working in preventing a similar incident and, if such an incident were to occur, in dealing with it effectively. This includes the need for effective joint working between the Food Standards Agency and the NI Departments and Agencies as well as between the Food Standards Agency and the Food Safety Authority of Ireland.

The Executive agreed that, building on the lessons learned and progress to date, work will now be taken forward by the relevant Departments and organisations to implement the remaining actions flowing from the recommendations to ensure preparedness for handling any such incident in the future.

The Report is available for viewing in the Assembly Library or on the OFMDFM website at <http://www.ofmdfmi.gov.uk/index/making-government-work/making-government-work-independent-reviews-and-reports.htm>