



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Committee for the Environment

OFFICIAL REPORT (Hansard)

Planning Bill: Consideration of Draft
Committee Report

4 June 2013

NORTHERN IRELAND ASSEMBLY

Committee for the Environment

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Members present for all or part of the proceedings:

Ms Anna Lo (Chairperson)
Mr Sydney Anderson
Mr Tom Elliott
Mrs Dolores Kelly
Mr Barry McElduff
Mr Ian Milne
Mr Peter Weir

The Chairperson: We will go straight into our discussion on the draft Committee report on the Planning Bill. That is at page 14 of members' packs. I hope members have had an opportunity to read through the draft report. Does anybody need any time now to read through it? Are you happy for me to continue?

Members indicated assent.

The Chairperson: OK. Obviously, we are just looking at a draft and we can amend the report. The final report will be provided for us on Thursday, and that is when we will have to sign off on it. The Committee Clerk has spotted a number of typographical errors, so there is no need to worry about those. They will be corrected for the final report. I will go through the draft report section by section rather than paragraph by paragraph, if that is OK?

Members indicated assent.

The Chairperson: OK. If we turn to pages 18 to 19, paragraphs 1 to 11 contain the Executive Summary. I wanted, before the first sentence of paragraph 6 —

Mrs D Kelly: It is the large 18, rather than the small, I think.

The Chairperson: Yes, at the top of the page. Sorry.

Mr Elliott: Sorry, what was that?

The Chairperson: Has everyone got to page 15? Sorry, page 18, at the top right-hand corner. Sorry, left-hand corner. I am looking at my draft because I have made notes on it.

At paragraph 6, I thought we could add a sentence, although I am open to discussion. It could read something like:

"following legal advice and clarification from departmental officials, the Committee is satisfied".

It would just add a bit of preamble.

Mrs D Kelly: You could say, Chair:

"the Committee sought and received legal advice and clarification."

The Chairperson: Yes, and:

"it is satisfied that this is not the case."

Just a line, half a sentence there. Are members OK with that?

Members indicated assent.

The Chairperson: Next, turn over to page 19. In paragraph 10; the second line reads, "that these concerns are unfounded". I thought that might be a bit bald. Do members agree that we use the word "unsubstantiated" rather than "unfounded"? The voluntary sector might say that those concerns are founded on their expertise or their understanding.

Mrs D Kelly: Chair, that was in consideration of the legal advice sought. You could set it in the context that there are fears, at this stage, that we believe to be unfounded or unsubstantiated. However, in order to be satisfied that a review — a review is a good idea; the latter part of that is fine.

The Chairperson: I think that we should change the word "unfounded" to "unsubstantiated", as it may be a better word. Is that OK?

Members indicated assent.

The Chairperson: Dolores, we did say there that we believed that, nonetheless, there would be value in undertaking a review.

The Committee Clerk: Apologies for interrupting, Chair, but the reference to "unfounded" in the Executive Summary reflects the fact that the Committee says, later in the document, that it believes that those concerns are unfounded. Is it the Committee's view that we should change those subsequent references as well?

Mr McElduff: I would be inclined to change them because both those amendments suggest that your point is rooted in evidence. "Unfounded" suggests that you just do not believe it, but if it is unsubstantiated, it means that there is no evidence to back it up or insufficient evidence to carry it through.

The Chairperson: The word "unfounded" appeared a couple of times in the later pages, so we will change that word throughout. Instead of "unfounded" we will use "unsubstantiated". Thanks to the thesaurus, we found a different word.

So, turning to page 20; the recommendations from the Committee are in paragraphs 12 to 16. Are members content?

Members indicated assent.

The Chairperson: OK, we will move on then to pages 22 to 24, paragraphs 18 to 37. At the first line of paragraph 27, I think we should add "draft" planning policy statement (PPS) 24; I do not think it was PPS 24 that we went out for consultation on. Can we double check that? I think it was draft PPS 24. Are members content?

Members indicated assent.

The Chairperson: OK. Next, we come to pages 25 to 34. There is a word in the second line at the top of page 14, which I think we should change to "implicitly".

Mrs D Kelly: Page 27.

The Chairperson: Sorry, page 27, the second line should read "It implicitly attempts". I do not think there is such a word as "impliededly".

Mrs D Kelly: No, there is not.

The Chairperson: OK. That is really all, members. Any other issues up to page 34? No?

Are members content with appendix 1, which contains the minutes of proceedings?

Members indicated assent.

The Chairperson: OK. Are members content with appendix 2, which contains the minutes of evidence?

Members indicated assent.

The Chairperson: Are members content with appendix 3, which contains the written submissions?

Members indicated assent.

The Chairperson: Are members content with appendix 4, which shows the list of witnesses?

Members indicated assent.

The Chairperson: Are members content with appendix 5, which comprises other papers submitted to the Committee?

Members indicated assent.

The Chairperson: Are members content with appendix 6, which contains the Research and Library Service research papers?

Members indicated assent.

The Chairperson: Members, are there any other issues that you might want to address or to be included in the report?

Mr Elliott: Was the meeting that we had in the Long Gallery recorded by Hansard?

The Chairperson: Yes.

Mr Elliott: We will need to attach an appendix for that as well.

The Chairperson: That forms part of the minutes of evidence.

OK. We will table and sign off on the final report at our meeting on Thursday. That is it, members. See you on Thursday. Thank you very much.