



**Northern Ireland  
Assembly**

**COMMITTEE FOR AGRICULTURE, ENVIRONMENT AND RURAL AFFAIRS**

**MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS**

**THURSDAY, 8 DECEMBER 2016**

**ROOM 30, PARLIAMENT BUILDINGS**

Present: Ms Caoimhe Archibald MLA (Chairperson)  
Mr Oliver McMullan MLA (Deputy Chairperson)  
Mr Sydney Anderson MLA  
Mr David Ford MLA  
Mr William Irwin MLA  
Mr Patsy McGlone MLA  
Mr Harold McKee MLA  
Mr Robin Swann MLA

In Attendance: Mrs Stella McArdle (Assembly Clerk)  
Mr Christopher McNickle (Assistant Clerk)  
Mr Oliver Bellew (Clerical Supervisor)  
Ms Marion Johnson (Clerical Officer)  
Miss Zoe Rogers (Bursary Student)

Apologies: Mr Maurice Bradley MLA  
Mr Edwin Poots MLA

The meeting opened in **public** session at **10.07 am**

**1. Apologies**

As above.

## **2. Chairperson's business**

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to write to Ms Linda Dillon MLA to thank her for her work as Chairperson of the Committee.

The Committee considered briefing notes in relation to a meeting between the Chairperson and representatives of NILGA and SOLACE to discuss what local government sees as priorities in waste management.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to request a written briefing from NILGA in relation to the 'Polluter Pays' principle.

The Chairperson discussed arrangements for the Committee's forthcoming visit to Dublin on 02 March 2016.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to incorporate a meeting with Bord Bia as part of its visit to Dublin on 02 March 2017.

The Chairperson informed the Committee that she had received copy correspondence between the British Irish Parliamentary Assembly and the Minister. The Committee noted that the Minister had been invited to make a written submission to the Economic Affairs Sub-Committee in relation to its inquiry into the implications of the UK's decision to leave the EU for the agri-food sectors across the UK and Ireland.

Mr Robin Swann MLA declared an interest as a Member of the British Irish Parliamentary Assembly.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to request that the Minister's submission should address the issue of how fish quotas may be applied in Northern Ireland following the UK's withdrawal from the EU.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to write to the Department to request sight of the Minister's submission when available.

## **3. Draft Minutes**

*Agreed:* The draft minutes of the meeting held on 1<sup>st</sup> December 2016 were agreed.

## **4. Matters Arising**

The Committee considered correspondence from the Department in relation to a range of follow up issues arising from the meeting held on 15 November 2016.

*Agreed:* The Committee noted that the projected TB Compensation requirement for 2016-17 is currently being assessed as part of the January Monitoring Round. The Committee agreed to request a written briefing

from the Department on how the pressures for TB Compensation are being addressed.

*Agreed:* The Committee noted that the final draft of a cost benefit analysis, in relation to the funding for the TBSPG Report, will be available shortly. The Committee agreed to request sight of the TBSPG funding cost benefit analysis when available.

*Agreed:* The Committee noted that the PfG plans will be screened for Rural Proofing in accordance with Departmental Guidance. The Committee agreed to request sight of the outcome of the PfG rural proofing screening exercise when available.

The Committee noted correspondence from the Department in relation to support for Dairy Farmers.

The Committee considered correspondence from the Department in relation to a range of follow up issues arising from the meeting held on 10 November 2016.

*Agreed:* The Committee noted that the Department is currently carrying out a review of the rates that bookmakers contribute to the Horse Racing Fund. The Committee agreed to request an update from the Department following agreement between the racecourses and the bookmakers on the Review of Rates.

*Agreed:* The Committee noted that the Minister, and her officials, have engaged with Whitehall, the devolved administrations and the Republic of Ireland in relation to the UK's exit from the EU. The Committee agreed to request an update on these engagements.

The Committee considered correspondence from the Minister in respect of the use of the Exceptional Adjustment Aid element of the EU Farm Support Package of £4.0m and it was noted that the Minister had indicated that she will use the funding through four specific schemes.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to request a written briefing on the detail of these schemes as soon as practical.

The Committee noted correspondence from the Department for Infrastructure in relation to the Review of Winter Flooding Report and Press Release.

The Committee considered correspondence from the Department in relation to a range of follow up issues arising from the meeting held on 17 November 2016.

*Agreed:* The Committee noted that DAERA and the Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment are currently looking at a Draft Options Paper prepared by the Loughs Agency for the replacement of MMV Ostrea. The Committee agreed to request an update from the Department whenever ministerial agreement has been reached on this matter.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to write to the Minister of Finance to express its concern at the delay in issuing budgetary guidance to the Loughs Agency.

*Agreed:* The Committee noted that, in terms of the Food Waste Regulations, consideration is being given to an information campaign to support implementation. The Committee agreed to request an update on the Food Waste information campaign, when available.

*Agreed:* The Committee noted information on the capital expenditure relating to the arc21 proposed incinerator. The Committee agreed to request information on the outcome of the Planning Appeals Commission hearing on the arc21 proposed incinerator, when appropriate.

The Committee considered correspondence from the Department on options for future support to Areas of Natural Constraint.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to request that departmental officials brief the Committee on the transitional payment scheme and on the value for money assessment of the Areas of Natural Constraint scheme at its meeting on 15 December 2016.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to write to the Department to express the view that whilst the Committee is mindful that this correspondence was received in advance of the press release the Committee was dissatisfied at the short notice and given.

**10.17 a.m.** Mr Sydney Anderson MLA joined the meeting.

**10.17 a.m.** Mr William Irwin MLA joined the meeting.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to write to the Ulster Farmer's Union; the Northern Ireland Agricultural Producers' Association; and the Belfast Hills Partnership to seek a written briefing on the Ministerial decision in relation to future support to Areas of Natural Constraint.

The Chairperson reminded Members that at the meeting of 10th November 2016, the Committee considered a Budget Research paper on financial issues. At that time, it was agreed to forward the Research paper to the Department for a response to the questions raised in the paper.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to remind the Department that the response in is now overdue.

## **5. Oral evidence – Sustainable Agriculture Land Management Strategy**

**10.19 a.m.** The following witnesses joined the meeting:

Dr John Gilliland, Chairman, Expert Working Group

Professor Sue Christie, Member, Expert Working Group

The witnesses briefed the Committee on the Sustainable Agriculture Land Management Strategy.

**10.20 a.m.** Mr Patsy McGlone MLA joined the meeting.

**10.53 a.m.** Mr Robin Swann MLA left the meeting.

**11.11 a.m.** Mr Oliver McMullan MLA left the meeting.

Mr William Irwin MLA declared an interest as an active farmer.

**11.14 a.m.** Mr Patsy McGlone left the meeting.

**11.21 a.m.** Mr William Irwin MLA left the meeting.

**11.25 a.m.** Mr Patsy McGlone returned to the meeting.

**11.25 a.m.** Mr William Irwin returned to the meeting.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to write to the Chairperson of the Expert Working Group to request that the Group liaises with AFBI in connection with potential benefits to the sheep sector and hill farmers.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to request an update from the Department on the potential funding arrangements for the Sustainable Agriculture Land Management Strategy.

**11.28 a.m.** The witnesses left the meeting.

## **6. Oral evidence – NIFDA Report – Brexit: Challenges and Opportunities for Food and Drink**

**11.29 a.m.** The following witness joined the meeting:

Mr Declan Billington, Chairman, Northern Ireland Food and Drink Association.

Mr Billington briefed the Committee on the report entitled ‘Brexit: Challenges and Opportunities for Northern Ireland Food and Drink’.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to forward the NIFDA Report to the British Irish Parliamentary Assembly, to Northern Ireland MEPs and to its counterpart committees in the Republic of Ireland, Scotland, Wales and Westminster.

**12.13 p.m.** Mr Billington left the meeting.

**12.14 p.m.** The Committee moved to closed session.

## **7. Committee Priorities**

The Committee considered its strategic priorities.

**12:16 a.m.** Mr Oliver McMullan MLA returned to the meeting.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to reconsider the matter at the meeting scheduled for 15 December 2016.

**12.31 p.m.** The Committee moved to public session.

**12.31 p.m.** Mr Patsy McGlone MLA left the meeting.

**12.31 p.m.** Mr David Ford MLA left the meeting.

**8. Written briefing from DAERA – SL1 Areas of Natural Constraint Regulations (NI) 2017**

The Committee considered a written briefing by the Department in relation to the Areas of Natural Constraint Regulations (NI) 2017.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed that it was content that the Department proceed to make the statutory rule.

**9. Written briefing from DAERA – SL1 Air Quality Standards (Amendment) Regulations (NI)**

The Committee considered a written briefing by the Department in relation to the SL1 Air Quality Standards (Amendment) Regulations (NI).

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed that it was content that the Department proceed to make the statutory rule.

**10. Written briefing from DAERA – SL1 Producer Responsibility Obligations (Packaging Waste) (Amendment No. 2) Regulations (NI) 2016**

The Committee considered a written briefing by the Department in relation to the Producer Responsibility Obligations (Packaging Waste) (Amendment No. 2) Regulations (NI) 2016.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed that it was content that the Department proceed to make the statutory rule. The Committee also agreed to write to the Department for an explanation of the overestimated waste targets for glass and plastic.

**11. Written briefing from DAERA – SR The Rathlin Island (Prohibited Methods of Fishing) Regulations (NI) 2016**

*Agreed:* The Committee considered SR 2016/408 The Rathlin Island (Prohibited Methods of Fishing) Regulations (NI) 2016 and, subject to the Examiner of Statutory Rules' Report, had no objection to the rule.

**12. Written briefing from DAERA – Issue of Noise Complaint Statistics for NI Report 2015/16**

The Committee noted a written briefing from the Department in relation to the Noise Complaint Statistics for Northern Ireland 2015/16 Report.

**13. Written briefing from DAERA – Issue of Air Pollution in Northern Ireland 2015 Report**

The Committee noted a written briefing from the Department in relation to the Air Pollution in Northern Ireland 2015 report.

**14. Written briefing from DAERA – Change Agenda**

The Committee considered a written briefing from the Department in relation to the Change Agenda.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to request an oral briefing from the Department on the matter.

**15. Written briefing from DAERA – December EU Fisheries Council**

The Committee considered a written briefing from the Department in relation to Fishing Opportunities 2017.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to request a written update on the outcome of the EU Fisheries Council when available.

**16. Correspondence**

The Committee noted correspondence from ISNI in relation to the Delivery Tracking System – Investment Activity Report November.

The Committee noted correspondence from the Committee for the Economy in relation to the development of the Agri-Food Marketing Body.

**17. Forward Work Programme**

The Committee noted the draft Forward Work Programme.

## **18. Any other business**

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to request an update on the timeframe in relation to the possible Introduction to the Assembly of the Fisheries Bill.

## **19. Date, time and place of next meeting**

The Committee noted that its next meeting will be held at 10.00 a.m. on Thursday 15<sup>th</sup> December 2016 in Room 30, Parliament Buildings.

**12.42 p.m.** The Chairperson adjourned the meeting.

**Caoimhe Archibald MLA**

Chairperson, Committee for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs

15<sup>th</sup> December 2016