

COMMITTEE FOR AGRICULTURE AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT

MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS

TUESDAY 12 NOVEMBER 2013
ROOM 30, PARLIAMENT BUILDINGS

Present: Mr Paul Frew MLA (Chairperson)
Mr Joe Byrne MLA (Deputy Chairperson)
Mrs Jo-Anne Dobson MLA
Mr William Irwin MLA
Mr Trevor Lunn MLA
Mr Ian Milne MLA
Mr Declan McAleer MLA
Mr Oliver McMullan MLA

Apologies: Mr Thomas Buchanan MLA
Ms Michelle McIlveen MLA
Mr Robin Swann MLA

In attendance: Ms Stella McArdle, Committee Clerk
Ms Elaine Farrell, Assistant Clerk
Mr Mark O'Hare, Clerical Supervisor
Ms Dagmar Walgraeve Clerical Officer

1.33 p.m. *The meeting commenced in Open Session*

1. Apologies

The apologies are recorded above.

2. Chairperson's Business

The Chairperson advised that Oliver McMullan, the clerk and the research officer attended a stakeholder conference on behalf of the Committee on CAP Pillar 1 on 6 November 2013.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Minister to request that the Committee receives a copy of the draft report from the Lough Neagh Working Group.

1.34 p.m. Mr McAleer joined the meeting.

3. Minutes of the meeting held on 5 November 2013

Agreed: The Committee agreed the draft minutes of the meeting held on 5 November 2013.

1.37 p.m. Mr Lunn joined the meeting.

4. Matters arising

Agreed: The Committee noted the correspondence from the Department dated 4 November 2013 regarding issues raised at the Committee meeting. The Committee agreed to write to the Department to ask for an explanation for the difference between the compensation paid and the salvage value of animals with bTb for slaughter.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department to inquire if it has had any knowledge of the anaerobic digester in the Ballymena area and if so, how this will impact on its SBRI competition.

Agreed: The Committee noted the correspondence from the Department dated 4 November 2013 regarding the Management Agreement for the Loughs Agency and agreed to forward it to the Loughs Agency for information.

Agreed: The Committee noted the copied correspondence from the Minister to the UFU dated 4 November 2013 regarding farm diversification-renewable energy installations. The Committee agreed to forward the correspondence to the Environment Committee for information.

Agreed: The Committee noted the updated paper from Farmers for Action regarding a Blue Print for Rural NI. The Committee agreed to write to Farmers for Action to advise that the Committee does not have the competence to bring forward legislation for pricing and suggest that they take the issue up with Westminster and the EU Commission.

Noted: The Committee noted the correspondence from the UFU dated 4 November 2013 which provided a response to the research paper on farm gate prices.

Noted: The Committee noted the correspondence from a number of individuals supporting the Farmers for Action proposal.

Noted: The Committee noted the update from the Department on Ash Die-back.

5. Mapping of Areas of Natural Constraint (New LFAs) – Oral Briefing DARD

The following Departmental officials joined the meeting at 1.45 p.m.

Rosemary Agnew, Principal Officer
Mark McLean, Principal Officer

The officials briefed the Committee and this was followed by a question and answer session.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department to seek clarification on the issue of the administrative unit to be used for the Areas of Natural Constraint exercise and whether there would be any difference if townlands were used instead of wards.

2.00 p.m. Mr McAleer left the meeting.

2.11 p.m. Mr Irwin joined the meeting.

2.17 p.m. Mr McAleer rejoined the meeting.

2.20 p.m. Mr Lunn left the meeting.

6. Update on current Rural Development Programme: Oral Briefing DARD

The following Departmental officials joined the meeting at 2.25 p.m.

Pauline Keegan, Assistant Secretary
Gareth Evans, Principal Officer
Michael McLean, Principal Officer

The officials briefed the Committee and this was followed by a question and answer session.

Mr Irwin declared an interest as a member of SOAR.

3.05 p.m. Mr McAleer left the meeting.

3.12 p.m. Mr Irwin left the meeting.

7. Correspondence

Agreed: The Committee noted the correspondence from the Department dated 5 November 2013 regarding the Food Standards Agency consultation on a proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council of Officials Controls and Other Official Activities. The Committee agreed to write to the Department to request an explanation of how this proposal may impact on NI.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Food Standards Agency to seek an update on the horse meat incident and to ask what stage investigations are currently at.

Noted: The Committee noted the invitation from the Committee for Employment and Learning to a Higher Education event on 19 November 2013.

8. Forward Work Programme

Agreed: The Committee agreed that the Chairperson and Deputy Chairperson would meet with the EFRA Committee in Westminster on 12 December 2013 to discuss a range of issues.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to schedule a presentation from Timothy McClelland in the New Year.

Agreed: The Committee agreed the Forward Work Programme.

9. AOB

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the relevant statutory agencies and the Department to ask what contingency plans have been agreed for next winter in light of this year's spring blizzard.

10. Date, time and place of the next meeting

The next meeting of the Committee for Agriculture and Rural Development will take place on Tuesday 19 November 2013 at 1.30 p.m. in Room 30, Parliament Buildings.

3.25 p.m. The meeting moved into Closed Session.

11. Farm Safety – Committee Discussion

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Minister to state that the Committee has concerns about the lack of information and credible statistics on non-fatal farm accidents; that there needs to be a definite focus on farm safety in the next Farm Modernisation Programme and further training and awareness on farm safety issues in general.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to host a farm safety event in Parliament Buildings on 14 January 2014.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that the Chairperson would meet with the Chairperson of the ETI Committee to discuss the range of actions the Committee has agreed regarding farm safety.

The meeting adjourned at 3.45 p.m.

Paul Frew, Chairperson, Committee for Agriculture and Rural Development

Date