

COMMITTEE FOR AGRICULTURE AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT

MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS

TUESDAY 14 JANUARY 2014
ROOM 30, PARLIAMENT BUILDINGS

Present: Mr Paul Frew MLA (Chairperson)
Mr Joe Byrne MLA (Deputy Chairperson)
Mr Thomas Buchanan MLA
Mrs Jo-Anne Dobson MLA
Mr William Irwin MLA
Mr Ian Milne MLA
Mr Declan McAleer MLA
Ms Michelle McIlveen MLA
Mr Oliver McMullan MLA

Apologies: Mr Robin Swann MLA

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

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

1. Apologies

The apologies are recorded above.

2. Chairperson's Business

Noted: The Committee noted the note of the meeting held on 12 December 2013 with the Chairperson and Deputy Chairperson and the EFRA Committee in Westminster.

The Chairperson advised the Committee that he and the Deputy Chairperson will meet informally with Farmers for Action on 20 January 2014. All Committee Members are invited to attend.

1.35 p.m. Mr McAleer joined the meeting.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Minister on the issue of Remote Sensing and ask why farmers were not notified that an inspection was taking place which has resulted in delays to Single Farm Payments.

3. Minutes of the meeting held on 10 December 2013

Agreed: The Committee agreed the draft minutes of the meeting held on 10 December 2013.

4. Matters arising

Noted: The Committee noted the correspondence dated 30 December 2013 from the Department for the Environment regarding the status of the Marine Conservation Zones and discussions with the fishing industry.

Agreed: The Committee noted the correspondence dated 6 December 2013 from NIFPO on the issue of EU Infraction in respect of Strangford Lough. The Committee agreed to forward the correspondence to the Department for comment.

Agreed: The Committee noted the correspondence dated 13 December 2013 from the Department in respect of issues raised at the meeting on 26 November 2013. The Committee agreed to forward the extract on renewables to the ETI and Environment Committee for information.

Noted: The Committee noted the correspondence dated 19 December 2013 from the Department in respect of issues raised at the meeting on 3 December 2013.

Noted: The Committee noted the correspondence dated 18 December 2013 from the Minister in relation to farm safety.

Noted: The Committee noted the correspondence dated 16 December 2013 from the Department regarding the publication of a paper detailing how areas of natural constraint will be designated.

Noted: The Committee noted the correspondence dated 18 December 2013 from the Department in respect of a paper it has published on the impact of dividing Northern Ireland into sub-regions for the purpose of administering Direct Support.

Noted: The Committee noted the correspondence dated 18 December 2013 from the Department of Justice regarding an oversight in respect of the Committee not receiving an invitation to the launch of the subsidy for security equipment for farms.

Agreed: The Committee noted the correspondence dated 23 December 2013 from the Minister regarding the action taken in light of the loss of Republic of Ireland contracts by dairy processors in Northern Ireland. The Committee agreed to request that it is kept informed of any further developments in respect of this matter.

Noted: The Committee noted the correspondence dated 6 December 2013 from Roads Service regarding their contingency plans for severe weather.

Noted: The Committee noted the latest update from the Department in respect of Ash Dieback.

5. SR 2013/295: The Less Favoured Area Compensatory Allowances Regulations (NI) 2013

Question put and agreed:

That the Committee for Agriculture and Rural Development has considered SR 2013/295: The Less Favoured Area Compensatory Allowances Regulations (NI) 2013 and has no objections to the rule.

6. SR 2013/304: The Seeds (Miscellaneous Amendments) Regulations (NI) 2013

Question put and agreed:

That the Committee for Agriculture and Rural Development has considered SR 2013/304: The Seeds (Miscellaneous Amendments) Regulations (NI) 2013 and has no objections to the rule.

1.50 p.m. Mr McMullan joined the meeting.

7. Correspondence

Agreed: The Committee noted the correspondence dated 18 December 2013 from the Committee for Justice on the draft guidance on the use of reasonable force to protect against agri-crime. The Committee agreed to respond to the guidance and seek a meeting with the PSNI to discuss the on-going issue of agri-crime.

1.55 p.m. Ms McIlveen left the meeting.

Agreed: The Committee noted the correspondence dated 11 December 2013 from the Committee for Finance and Personnel in respect of departmental post project evaluations. The Committee agreed to write to the Department to request further information on the three outstanding PPEs.

Agreed: The Committee noted the correspondence 6 December 2013 from the Committee for the Office of the First Minister and Deputy First Minister in respect of an Assembly Research paper on competitive EU funding in Northern Ireland. The Committee agreed to write to the Department to seek clarification on the source for monies it drew down EU Funding.

Noted: The Committee noted the correspondence dated 11 December 2013 from the Department which provides additional information on how the Loughs Agency planned for efficiency savings in 2013.

Agreed: The Committee noted the correspondence dated 18 December 2013 from the Committee for the Environment in respect of its inquiry into Wind Energy. The Committee agreed to consider a response to the inquiry at a future meeting.

Agreed: The Committee noted the correspondence dated 12 December 2013 requesting a copy of the report of the Lough Neagh Cross Departmental Working Group. The Committee agreed to forward a copy of the report when it becomes available.

Agreed: The Committee noted the correspondence dated 16 December 2013 from the Committee for the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister on the European Commission Work Programme 2014 and agreed to advise that the Committee's priorities are CAP and CFP Reform and its implementation, Plant Health and food security.

Noted: The Committee noted the correspondence from Investment Strategy NI in respect of the Departmental Investment Strategy Report for December 2013.

8. Forward Work Programme

Agreed: The Committee agreed to visit AFBI on 13 February 2014 and Greenmount College on 20 March 2014.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to participate in a “meet and greet” Committee stand at the Balmoral Show.

Agreed: The Committee agreed the Forward Work Programme.

9. AOB

There was no other business.

10. Date and time of the next meeting

The next meeting of the Committee for Agriculture and Rural Development will take place on Tuesday 21 January 2014 at 1.30 p.m. in Room 30, Parliament Buildings.

The meeting adjourned at 2.05 p.m.

Paul Frew, Chairperson, Committee for Agriculture and Rural Development

Date