

COMMITTEE FOR AGRICULTURE AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT

MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS

TUESDAY 18 FEBRUARY 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 Declan McAleer MLA
Ms Michelle McIlveen MLA
Mr Oliver McMullan MLA
Mr Robin Swann MLA

Apologies: Ms Judith Cochrane MLA

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

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

1. Ministerial Briefing

The Minister for Agriculture and Rural Development, Mrs Michelle O'Neill and the following officials joined the meeting at 1.33 p.m.

Noel Lavery, Permanent Secretary
Norman Fulton, Director of Policy and Economics
Colette McMaster, Assistant Secretary,
Andrew Elliott, Director of Rural Payments

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

1.33 p.m. Ms McIlveen left the meeting.

1.35 p.m. Mr McAleer joined the meeting.

Mr Irwin declared an interest as an active farmer.

2.44 p.m. Mr Byrne left the meeting.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department to request further information on the Environmental Assessment on Going for Growth, which has been requested by the European Commission.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Minister to request further information on the input the Department will have to the forthcoming visit by Minister Foster to Libya.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to request a draft Press Release to encourage on line application for Single Farm Payments.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to consider a draft letter to the Minister and the Executive at the next meeting on the issue of funding for the Rural Development Programme 2014-2020.

2. Apologies

The apologies are recorded above.

3. Chairperson's Business

The Chairperson advised the Committee that he has accepted a UFU invitation to its annual dinner on 28 March 2014.

The Chairperson advised the Committee that the Deputy Chairperson has accepted an invitation on his behalf to the Gibson Centenary Lecture in Queens University on 18 February 2014.

The Chairperson advised the Committee that OneNote training is available on 26 February 2014 and 13 March 2014 from 12.00 p.m. to 2.00 p.m. and is open to all Members and their party staff.

2.53 p.m. Mr McAleer left the meeting.

4. Minutes of the meeting held on 11 February 2014

Agreed: The Committee agreed the draft minutes of the meeting held on 11 February 2014.

5. Matters arising

Agreed: The Committee noted the correspondence dated 7 February 2014 from Mr Lambe regarding the Single Farm Payment appeal process and agreed to forward the correspondence to the Department for comment and to advise Mr Lambe accordingly.

Noted: The Committee noted the correspondence dated 10 February 2014 from the Department regarding issues raised at the meeting on 14 January 2014.

Agreed: The Committee noted the correspondence dated 12 February 2014 from the Department regarding issues raised at the meeting on 28 January 2014. The Committee agreed to forward an extract of the correspondence to the Committee for Culture, Arts and Leisure in respect of its inquiry into Arts of Working Class Communities.

6. Reservoirs Bill – Key Issues

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Minister to request financial information on the likely cost of compliance with the Reservoir Bill legislation and the grant support issue.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department to request information on all costs associated with DARD/Rivers Agency owned reservoirs.

2.56 p.m. Mr McAleer rejoined the meeting.

2.58 p.m. Mr Irwin left the meeting.

3.00 p.m. Mrs Dobson left the meeting.

7. Oral briefing NI Water: Reservoirs Bill

The following NI Water officials joined the meeting at 3.01 p.m.

Bill Gowdy, NI Water
Paddy Brow, NI Water

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

- 3.16 p.m. Mr Irwin rejoined the meeting.*
- 3.19 p.m. Mr Buchanan left the meeting.*
- 3.20 p.m. Mr Byrne rejoined the meeting.*
- 3.40 p.m. Mr Swann left the meeting.*
- 3.45 p.m. Mrs Dobson rejoined the meeting.*
- 3.46 p.m. Mr McMullan left the meeting.*
- 3.49 p.m. Mr Buchanan rejoined the meeting.*

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to NI Water to request details on all NI Water owned reservoirs including capacity and financial costs.

8. Oral briefing NI Environment Agency: Reservoirs Bill

The following NI Environment Agency officials joined the meeting at 3.50 p.m.

Peter Close, Senior Scientific Officer
Bob Davidson, Senior Scientific Officer

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

- 3.53 p.m. Mr McMullan rejoined the meeting.*
- 3.57 p.m. Mrs Dobson and Mr Irwin left the meeting.*
- 3.59 p.m. Mr Swann rejoined the meeting.*
- 4.04 p.m. Mr McMullan left the meeting.*
- 4.07 p.m. Mr McAleer rejoined the meeting.*
- 4.12 p.m. Mr Irwin rejoined the meeting.*
- 4.15 p.m. Mr Swann left the meeting.*

9. SL1: The Welfare of Animals at the Time of Killing Regulations (NI) 2014

Agreed: The Committee agreed to defer consideration of the SL1: The Welfare of Animals at the Time of Killing Regulations (NI) 2014 until it received a briefing from officials at the meeting on 25 February 2014.

10. Correspondence

- Agreed:* The Committee noted the correspondence from the NI Meat Exporters Association and agreed to schedule a briefing with it on 25 February 2014.
- Agreed:* The Committee noted the correspondence dated 12 February 2014 from the OFMDFM Committee regarding Competitive European Funding and agreed to forward it to the Department requesting information on projects which received this funding.
- Noted:* The Committee noted the correspondence dated 12 February 2014 from the OFMDFM Committee in respect of the Barroso Desk Officers' Report for October-December 2013.
- Noted:* The Committee noted the correspondence dated 10 February 2014 from the Finance and Personnel Committee on the NI Audit Office on Sick Absence in the Public Sector.
- Noted:* The Committee noted the correspondence dated 11 February 2014 from the Minister regarding the Assessment of common Land for Area Based Scheme Purposes.

11. Forward Work Programme

- Noted:* The Committee noted that NILGA and the Water Appeals Commission have advised that they will forward written evidence in respect of the Reservoirs Bill rather than provide oral evidence.
- Agreed:* The Committee agreed the draft Forward Work Programme.

12. AOB

- Agreed:* The Committee agreed to seek clarification from Rivers Agency on what constitutes a reservoir manager.

13. Date and time of the next meeting

The next meeting of the Committee for Agriculture and Rural Development will take place on Tuesday 25 February 2014 at 1.00 p.m. in Room 30, Parliament Buildings.

The meeting adjourned at 4.29 p.m.

Paul Frew, Chairperson, Committee for Agriculture and Rural Development

Date