

COMMITTEE FOR AGRICULTURE AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT

MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS

**TUESDAY 29 APRIL 2014
ROOM 30, PARLIAMENT BUILDINGS**

Present: Mr Paul Frew MLA (Chairperson)
Mr Joe Byrne MLA (Deputy Chairperson)
Mr Thomas Buchanan MLA
Ms Judith Cochrane 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
Mr Robin Swann MLA

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

1.34 p.m. The meeting commenced in Closed Session.

The Committee discussed the allocation of questions to Rivers Agency.

1.35 p.m. Mr McAleer joined the meeting.

1.37 p.m. The meeting moved into Open Session.

1.38 p.m. Mr Swann joined the meeting.

1. Apologies

There are no apologies.

2. Chairperson's Business

Agreed: The Committee noted the outcome of an informal meeting with the Fishermen's Forum on Monday 28 April 2014. The Committee agreed to write to the Minister asking that she meet with the Forum as a matter of urgency.

The Chairperson advised the Committee that he will be visiting a reservoir in Randalstown on 30 April 2014, in relation to the Committee's scrutiny of the Reservoirs Bill.

3. Minutes of the meeting held on 8 April 2014

Agreed: The Committee agreed the draft minutes of the meeting held on 8 April 2014.

4. Matters Arising

Agreed: The Committee noted the correspondence from the Department, dated 10 April 2014, in respect of issues raised at the meeting on 25 March 2014. The Committee agreed to forward the extract in respect of the Investment Strategy Project Delivery Portal to the Committee for Finance and Personnel for information.

Agreed: The Committee noted the correspondence from the Department, dated 14 April 2014, in respect of issues raised at the meeting on 25 March 2014. The Committee agreed to forward the extract on the issue of an active farmer and farm ID number to the Environment Committee for information.

Noted: The Committee noted the correspondence from the Department, dated 3 April 2014, in respect of issues raised at the meeting of 18 March 2014 by the farming group from Severely Disadvantaged Areas. The Committee noted DARD's position in relation to issues discussed by the farming group from Severely Disadvantaged Areas.

Agreed: The Committee further agreed to forward the extract regarding planning applications for slurry stores to the Environment Committee for information.

Noted: The Committee noted correspondence from the Department, dated 17 April 2014, in respect of issues raised at the meeting of 1 April 2014. The Committee noted the Minister's position in relation to the Northern Ireland Rural Development Programme 2014-2020.

Agreed: Further, the Committee agreed to write to the Department for an update on the Sustainable Use of Poultry Litter; and express concern that Strategic Goal 3 is not measurable or time bound. The Committee also agreed to seek some further detail on the suggested target for Remote Sensing.

Noted: The Committee also noted the Department's response regarding correspondence from a Rural Support Group regarding rural crime.

Noted: The Committee noted correspondence from the Department, dated 15 April 2014, in respect of issues raised at the meeting of 3 December 2013 regarding the NI Fish Producers Organisation and DARD.

Noted: The Committee noted correspondence from the Department, dated 17 April 2014, in respect of issues raised at the meeting of 28 January 2014 regarding the FSA consultation on a Proposal for a Regulation of the EU Parliament and of the Council on Official Controls and Other Official Activities.

Agreed: The Committee noted correspondence from the PSNI, dated 11 April 2014, in respect of Redcaps Security Solutions Ltd and agreed to forward it to both Redcaps Security and the Committee for Justice for information.

Agreed: The Committee noted correspondence from Marks and Spencer's, dated 22 April 2014, regarding its position on the proposals by NI Meat Exporters Association to impose penalties on cattle not in-spec. The Committee agreed to forward it to both the Ulster Farmers' Union and the NI Agricultural Producers Association.

Mrs Dobson made a declaration that her husband is a beef farmer.

Agreed: The Committee noted the correspondence from the Minister to the Ulster Farmers' Union dated, 16th April 2014, regarding concerns around anti-competitive measures in the beef trade. The Committee agreed to write to the Minister to ascertain how she intends to address anti-competitive practices; and suggest she may wish to consider hosting a forum with both beef processors and farm organisations to discuss concerns.

Noted: The Committee noted the correspondence from a Mr Lambe, dated 15th April 2014, in relation to the Single Farm Payment Appeals process.

Noted: The Committee noted the correspondence from the Department detailing the most up to date position on Ash Dieback.

1.41 p.m. Ms Cochrane joined the meeting.

5. Update on Implementation of CAP in the UK and Ireland: RalSe Paper

Agreed: The Committee noted the research paper as provided by the Committee RalSe officer and agreed that any comments or further questions would be forwarded to the RalSe officer through the Clerk.

6. Technical Decisions on CAP Pillar 1: Oral briefing DARD

The following Departmental officials joined the meeting at 1.50 p.m.:

Norman Fulton, Chief Agricultural Economist;
Rosemary Agnew, Principal Officer; and
Mark McLean, Principal Agricultural Economist.

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

Mr Irwin made a declaration that he receives the Single Farm Payment.

1.55 p.m. Ms McIlveen left the meeting.

2.07 p.m. Mr Milne left the meeting.

2.09 p.m. Ms Dobson left the meeting.

2.17 p.m. Mr Milne rejoined the meeting.

2.32 p.m. Ms Cochrane left the meeting.

2.40 p.m. Mr Irwin left the meeting.

2.41 p.m. Mr McAleer left the meeting.

4.42p.m. Mr Irwin left the meeting.

Officials left the meeting at 2.47 p.m.

7. New Fisheries Bill: Oral briefing DARD

The following Departmental officials joined the meeting at 2.49 p.m.:

John Terrington, Principal Officer;
Mark McCaughan, Chief Fisheries Officer;
Ian Humes, Principal Officer; and
Kenny Parker, Deputy Principal.

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

2.49 p.m. Ms Cochrane rejoined the meeting.

2.52 p.m. Ms McIlveen rejoined the meeting.

2.53 p.m. Mr Milne left the meeting.

3.10 p.m. Mr Irwin rejoined the meeting.

3.16 p.m. Mr McMullan joined the meeting.

3.18 p.m. Mr Byrne left the meeting.

3.20 p.m. Mr Irwin left the meeting.

3.25 p.m. Ms Cochrane left the meeting.

3.33 p.m. Ms Dobson rejoined the meeting.

3.36 p.m. Mr Byrne rejoined the meeting.

3.54 p.m. Mr Buchanan left the meeting.

4.05 p.m. Mr Milne rejoined the meeting.

4.06 p.m. Mr McMullan left the meeting.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that as it had officials from Fisheries at the table, it would consider agenda item 10, SR 2014 / 96 The Sea Fishing (Financial Assistance to Fishing Boats) Regulations (NI) 2014, next.

8. SR 2014 / 96 The Sea Fishing (Financial Assistance to Fishing Boats) Regulations (NI) 2014.

Question put and agreed:

That the Committee for Agriculture and Rural Development has considered SR 2014/96: The Sea Fishing (Financial Assistance to Fishing Boats) Regulations (NI) 2014 and has no objections to the rule.

Officials left the meeting at 4.06 p.m.

4.07 p.m. Ms McIlveen left the meeting.

9. Reservoirs Bill: Clerk's memo on key issues and other papers

- Agreed:* The Committee agreed to add the further submissions from the Creggan Country Park and the Institution of Civil Engineers in respect of the Reservoirs Bill to the Committee website.
- Agreed:* The Committee agreed to add the correspondence from both Derry City Council and the Department for Regional Development in respect to Creggan Country Park to the Committee website. It further agreed to forward the correspondence to Creggan Country Park for information.
- Agreed:* The Committee noted the correspondence from the Department dated 15 April 2014 and 25 April 2014 in relation to the Reservoir Bill meetings of 11 and 18 March 2014 and 8 April 2014 respectively, and agreed to add them to the Committee website.
- Noted:* The Committee noted the correspondence from NILGA in respect to the Reservoirs Bill.

10. Reservoirs Bill: Oral briefing Rivers Agency

The following Departmental officials joined the meeting at 4.10 p.m.:

David Porter, Director of Development; and
Kieran Brazier, Head of Bill Team.

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

4.11 p.m. Ms McIlveen rejoined the meeting.

4.20 p.m. Mr Byrne left the meeting.

4.30 p.m. The meeting suspended.

4.53 p.m. The meeting resumed with the following Members present: Mr Frew, Mr Buchanan, Mrs Dobson and Mr Swann.

4.55 p.m. Mr Irwin rejoined the meeting.

4.58 p.m. Mr Milne rejoined the meeting.

5.02 p.m. Mr McMullan rejoined the meeting.

5.31 p.m. Mr Milne left the meeting.

5.35 p.m. Mr Irwin left the meeting.

Agreed: Officials agreed to consider a number of draft amendments to the Bill as discussed during the Committee Meeting.

Officials left the meeting at 5.45 p.m.

11. Correspondence

Agreed: The Committee noted correspondence from the Mid Antrim Animal Sanctuary requesting a meeting. The Committee agreed to schedule an informal meeting for a Monday or Tuesday.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that it would not meet on Tuesday 20th May 2014.

Agreed: The Committee noted correspondence from Weber Shandwick, dated 9 April 2014, requesting to present to the Committee regarding Northern Ireland's horse racecourses. The Committee agreed to schedule a presentation in autumn 2014.

Agreed: The Committee noted correspondence from the RSPB, dated 25 February 2014, to the First Minister and deputy First Minister expressing concerns about the transfer of funds for the next Rural Development Programme and the impact this will have on farm businesses and the agri-environment schemes. The Committee agreed to ask that it is copied into any response from the First Minister and deputy First Minister.

Noted: The Committee noted correspondence from the Farm Safety Partnership regarding the launch which took place on 7 April 2014 of the new Farm Safety Action Plan.

Noted: The Committee noted the invitation from the NI Human Rights Commission for an event to highlight the importance of human rights in combating poverty and social inequality on 16th May.

Noted: The Committee noted correspondence from the Minister, dated 17 April 2014, outlining that the DARD appeal on the EU Court of Justice not accepting its case against disallowance regarding CAP was not successful. The Committee further noted that DARD still has two other cases being brought by DEFRA and that it will be informed of developments in the other two cases.

Noted: The Committee noted the correspondence from McDonalds unveiling a free tool to help farmers calculate financial savings.

12. Forward Work Programme

Noted: The Committee noted that a visit had been scheduled to the reservoir in Creggan Country Park on Thursday 5 June 2014.

Agreed: The Committee agreed the Forward Work Programme.

13. AOB

There was no other business.

14. Date and time of the next meeting

The next meeting of the Committee for Agriculture and Rural Development will take place on Tuesday 6 May 2014 at 1.30 p.m. in Room 30, Parliament Buildings.

The meeting adjourned at 5.50 p.m.

Paul Frew, Chairperson, Committee for Agriculture and Rural Development

Date