

COMMITTEE FOR AGRICULTURE AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT

MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS

**TUESDAY 6 MAY 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
Ms Michelle McIlveen MLA
Mr Oliver McMullan MLA
Mr Robin Swann MLA

Apologies: Ms Judith Cochrane MLA
Mr Declan McAleer MLA

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

1. 34 p.m. The meeting commenced in Open Session.

1. Apologies

The apologies are recorded above.

2. Chairperson's Business

The Chairperson advised the Committee that he had visited a reservoir in Randalstown on 30 April 2014 in connection with the Reservoirs Bill.

3. Minutes of the meeting held on 29 April 2014

Agreed: The Committee agreed the draft minutes of the meeting held on 29 April 2014.

4. Matters Arising

Agreed: The Committee noted the correspondence from ASDA, Sainsbury's and Tesco on the beef supply chain and agreed to forward them to the Ulster Farmers' Union and NIAPA for information.

Agreed: The Committee noted the correspondence dated 14 April 2014 from the Groceries Code Adjudicator on the beef supply chain and agreed to forward it to the Ulster Farmers' Union and NIAPA for information.

Noted: The Committee noted the correspondence dated 25 April 2014 from the Department in respect of the Outcome of the Rural Support Review.

Noted: The Committee noted the correspondence dated 25 April 2014 from the Department regarding issues raised at the meeting on 8 April 2014.

5. Reservoirs Bill – Informal Clause by Clause and consideration

The following Rivers Agency officials joined the meeting at 1.40 p.m. to discuss issues in relation to the informal clause by clause of the Reservoirs Bill.

Mr David Porter, Director of Development
Kieran Brazier, Head of Bill Team

The Committee queried Clause 1 and how the volume of water would be measured.

The Committee discussed Clause 2 to 5 and no issues were raised.

1.55 p.m. Mr Byrne and Mr Swann left the meeting.

Agreed: The Committee discussed Clause 6 and agreed to request clarification from Rivers Agency on subsection 6(8).

The Committee discussed Clause 7 and no issues were raised.

Agreed: The Committee discussed Clause 8 and agreed to request clarification from Rivers Agency on the offences and associated fines.

2.16 p.m. Mr Irwin left.

Agreed: The Committee discussed Clause 9 and agreed to request more detail and clarification from Rivers Agency on subsection 4.

The Committee discussed Clause 10-13 and no issues were raised.

The Committee queried Clause 14 and the costs associated with this clause.

Agreed: The Committee discussed Clause 15 and 16 and queried the role of a previous reservoir manager and agreed to request clarification from Rivers Agency.

The Committee discussed Clause 17 and expressed concerns regarding risk and fairness of the clause.

2.58 p.m. Mr Swann rejoined the meeting.

3.07 p.m. Mr Byrne rejoined the meeting.

The Committee discussed Clause 18 and 19 and no issues were raised.

Agreed: The Committee discussed Clause 20 and 21 and agreed to request clarification from Rivers Agency regarding costs for reviews and appeals.

3.12 p.m. Mr Buchanan left the meeting.

3.13 p.m. Mr Irwin rejoined the meeting.

Agreed: The Committee discussed Clause 21 and agreed to request that Rivers Agency bring forward an amendment based on the recommendation by the Examiner of Statutory Rules.

3.22 p.m. Mrs Dobson left the meeting.

Agreed: The Committee discussed Clause 22 and agreed to request clarification from Rivers Agency on subsection (2)(a)(iv).

The Committee discussed Clause 23 and no issues were raised.

Agreed: The Committee discussed Clause 24 and agreed to request clarification from Rivers Agency on the level of penalties and responsibilities for the Reservoir Managers.

3.31 p.m. Mr Buchanan left the meeting.

3.32 p.m. Mr Milne joined the meeting.

3.32 p.m. Ms McIlveen left the meeting.

The Committee discussed Clause 25 and raised queries regarding public access to information.

The Committee discussed Clause 25(2)(k) and proposed amendments and indicated that it was still not content.

The Committee discussed Clause 26 and 27 and no issues were raised.

6. Update on SFP 2013 payments and 2014 progress: Oral briefing DARD

The following Departmental officials joined the meeting at 4.00 p.m.:

Andrew Elliott, Director of EU Area-Based Schemes
Pauline Rooney, Head of EU Audit & Compliance Programme Unit
Richard Crowe, Head of Countryside Management Unit

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

4.12 p.m. Mr Buchanan rejoined the meeting.

4.17 p.m. Ms McIlveen rejoined the meeting.

Mr Irwin declared an interest that he receives Single Farm Payment.

4.27 p.m. Mr Irwin left the meeting.

4.34 p.m. The meeting suspended.

4.55 p.m. the meeting resumed with the following Members in attendance: Mr Frew, Mr Irwin, Ms McIlveen and Mr McMullan.

4.57 p.m. Mr Byrne rejoined the meeting.

5.04 p.m. Mrs Dobson rejoined the meeting.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department to request an analysis of the information on entitlement trading and to provide an estimate of when this will be finalised.

7. Business Plan 2014/15 including update on Tree disease: Oral briefing Forest Service

The following Departmental officials joined the meeting at 5.05 p.m.:

Malcolm Beatty, Chief Executive
Stuart Morwood, Director of Plant Health Policy
Jim Crummie, Director of Plant Health Inspection
Alistair McCracken, Principal Scientific Officer

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

5.17 p.m. Ms McIlveen left the meeting.

5.31 p.m. Mr McMullan left the meeting.

5.34 p.m. Mr McMullan rejoined the meeting.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Minister to request that she outlines any discussions she has had with her counterpart in the Republic of Ireland in respect of pre-notification legislation for high risk plant species. The Committee further agreed to ask what the Minister's intention would be if there are any further delays in the legislative process.

8. Correspondence

Agreed: The Committee noted the correspondence dated 1 May 2014 from the OFMDFM Committee in respect of the PEDU report on June 2012 flooding and agreed to forward it to Rivers Agency for comment.

Noted: The Committee noted the correspondence dated 30 April 2014 from the Committee for Finance and Personnel in respect of in-year monitoring.

Noted: The Committee noted the correspondence from the Department in respect of the April 2014 Investment Strategy Report.

9. Forward Work Programme

Agreed: The Committee agreed the Forward Work Programme.

10. AOB

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department in respect of the number of recent cases of dead animals being dumped on private land; to ask the Department for any information it may have on this issue and what is being done to tackle it and to establish if this falls under the Welfare of Animals Act.

11. Date and time of the next meeting

The next meeting of the Committee for Agriculture and Rural Development will take place on Tuesday 13 May 2014 at 1.30 p.m. in Room 30, Parliament Buildings.

The meeting adjourned at 5.55 p.m.

Paul Frew, Chairperson, Committee for Agriculture and Rural Development

Date