

COMMITTEE FOR AGRICULTURE AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT

MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS

**TUESDAY 10 FEBRUARY 2015
ROOM 30, PARLIAMENT BUILDINGS**

Present: Mr William Irwin MLA (Chairperson)
Mr Joe Byrne MLA (Deputy Chairperson)
Mr Sydney Anderson MLA
Mr Tom Buchanan MLA
Mrs Jo-Anne Dobson MLA
Mr Tom Elliott MLA
Mr Ian Milne MLA
Mr Declan McAleer MLA
Mr Kieran McCarthy MLA
Mr Oliver McMullan MLA
Mr Edwin Poots MLA

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

1.52 p.m. The meeting commenced in Open Session.

1. Apologies

There are no apologies.

2. Chairperson's Business

The Chairperson advised the Committee that the Effective Questioning Technique session is scheduled for 24 February 2015 and Members should make the effort to attend.

3. Minutes of the meeting held on 3 February 2015

Agreed: The Committee agreed the draft minutes of the meeting held on 3 February 2015.

4. Matters Arising

- Noted:* The Committee noted the correspondence dated 29 January 2015 from Commissioner Phil Hogan in respect of the dairy industry.
- Noted:* The Committee noted the correspondence dated 26 January 2015 from the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs in respect of the dairy industry.
- Noted:* The Committee noted the correspondence dated 30 January 2015 from the Chairman of the Joint Committee on Agriculture, Food and the Marine in respect of its recent meeting with the Committee.
- Noted:* The Committee noted the Ash Dieback update provided by the Department.
- Noted:* The Committee noted the briefing note from the Department in respect of an Avian Flu Outbreak in England.

5. Oral Briefing DARD: The Reservoirs Bill proposed amendments on number of supervised visits.

The following Departmental officials joined the meeting at 1.54 p.m.

David Porter, Grade 6
Kieran Brazier, Grade 7

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

2.03 p.m. Mr McCarthy joined the meeting.

2.06 p.m. Mrs Dobson joined the meeting.

2.10 p.m. Mr Elliott left the meeting.

- Agreed:* The Committee agreed to write to the Department to request information on the twenty one reservoirs Rivers Agency are still considering and to ask if they are privately owned.
- Agreed:* The Department agreed to provide additional information regarding the number of reservoirs which will fall under the remit of the Reservoirs Bill.
- Agreed:* The Committee agreed the amendments to Clause 25.

Agreed: The Committee agreed the new Clause 25A.

Agreed: The Committee agreed the amendment to Clause 33.

Agreed: The Committee agreed the amendment to Clause 103A and schedule 3.

Agreed: The Committee agreed the amendment to Clause 117.

Agreed: The Committee agreed the amendment to Clause 120.

2.35 Mr McMullan left the meeting.

The Chairperson advised the Committee that the accepted amendments will be reflected in an addendum to the Reservoirs Bill Committee Report.

6. Oral Briefing UFU: The Pig Industry

The following UFU representatives joined the meeting at 2.35 p.m.

Ivor Ferguson, Deputy President
Jonathan Cuddy, Pork and Bacon Committee Chairman
Roger Allen, Pig Policy Officer

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

2.39 p.m. Mr McMullan rejoined the meeting.

2.49 p.m. Mr Poots joined the meeting.

2.51 p.m. Mr McAleer joined the meeting.

Mrs Dobson declared an interest that her husband is a beef farmer.

3.09 p.m. Mrs Dobson left the meeting.

3.12 p.m. Mr McCarthy left the meeting.

3.17 p.m. Mr Buchanan joined the meeting.

3.23 p.m. Mr Elliott rejoined the meeting.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the local pig processors in respect of the lack of transparency regarding the price differential between NI and GB. The Committee further agreed to copy the Minister into the correspondence.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the British Pig Executive (BPEX) to highlight the difficulties currently being experienced in the pig industry.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Groceries Code Adjudicator to express concern in respect of the growing Northern Ireland/Great Britain pig price differential.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to issue a Press Release to highlight its support for the local pig industry and, to express concern at the pig price differential. The Committee agreed to sign off the Press Release via a written procedure.

7. Commission Discussion on TRPSI draft motion

Agreed: The Committee agreed the amendments to paragraph 70.

Agreed: The Committee agreed the draft motion.

8. Written brief: Public Consultation on Rural Proofing Bill

Agreed: The Committee noted the written briefing on the Public Consultation on the Rural Proofing Bill and agreed to write to the Department to suggest that more of the public meetings are scheduled in rural areas. The Committee further agreed to ask why Belfast was considered as a suitable venue for a public meeting on a rural issue.

3.31 p.m. Mr McCarthy rejoined the meeting.

9. SR 2015/16: the Less Favoured Area Compensatory Allowances Regulations (NI)

Question put and agreed:

That the Committee for Agriculture and Rural Development has considered SR 2015/16: the Less Favoured Area Compensation Allowances Regulations (NI) 2015, and, subject to comment from the Examiner of Statutory Rules has no objections to the rule.

3.33 p.m. Mr McAleer left the meeting.

10. SR 2015/17: The Transitional Payment to Disadvantaged Area Scheme (NI) 2015

Question put and agreed:

That the Committee for Agriculture and Rural Development has considered SR 2015/17: The Transitional Payment to Disadvantaged Area

Scheme (NI) 2015 and, subject to comment from the Examiner of Statutory Rules, has no objections to the rule.

11. SR 2014/307: The Nitrates Action Programme Regulations (NI) 2014

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department to request clarification on how slopping land is measured.

Question put and agreed:

That the Committee for Agriculture and Rural Development has considered SR 2014/307: The Nitrates Action Programme Regulations (NI) 2014 and has no objections to the rule.

12. Correspondence

Noted: The Committee noted the correspondence dated 4 February 2015 from the Finance and Personnel Committee in respect of the Budget Bill (NI) 2015 and Spring Supplementary Estimates 2014-15.

Noted: The Committee noted the correspondence dated 5 February 2015 from the Department in respect of the 2014/15 Spring Supplementary Estimates.

13. Forward Work Programme

Noted: The Committee noted that the written update on Brucellosis Eradication, originally scheduled for the meeting on 17 February 2015, has now been deferred to 24 February 2015 at the request of the Department.

Noted: The Committee noted the Effective Questioning Techniques has been scheduled for the meeting on 24 February 2015.

Agreed: The Committee agreed the draft Forward Work Programme.

14. AOB

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the UFU to seek an update on milk prices.

3.37 p.m. Mr McCarthy left the meeting.

15. Date and time of the next meeting

The next meeting of the Committee for Agriculture and Rural Development will take place on Tuesday 17 February 2015 at 1.30 p.m. in Room 30, Parliament Buildings.

3.38 p.m. The meeting adjourned.

William Irwin, Chairperson, Committee for Agriculture and Rural Development

Date