

## COMMITTEE FOR AGRICULTURE AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT

### MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS

**TUESDAY 8 SEPTEMBER 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 Declan McAleer MLA  
Mr Kieran McCarthy MLA  
Mr Edwin Poots MLA  
Mr Robin Swann MLA

Apologies: Mr Ian Milne MLA  
Mr Oliver McMullan MLA

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

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

*2.08 p.m. Mr McAleer joined the meeting.*

#### **1. Apologies**

The apologies are recorded above.

#### **2. Chairperson's Business**

*Noted:* The Committee noted that the Chairperson and the Deputy Chairperson will be meeting with the Minister on Tuesday 15 September to discuss the timescales for the Rural Proofing Bill and the Fisheries Bill.

*Noted:* The Committee noted that the Chairperson and the Deputy Chairperson will be meeting with the Minister on Monday 21 September to discuss AFBI.

### **3. Minutes of the meeting held on 30 June 2015 and 30 July 2015**

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed the draft minutes of the meetings held on 30 June 2015 and 30 July 2015.

### **4. Matters Arising**

*Agreed:* The Committee considered the correspondence dated 1 July 2015 from the Department in relation to issues raised at the meetings of 28 May 2015 and 16 June 2015 and agreed to seek further information on a number of areas.

*Agreed:* The Committee considered the correspondence dated 15 July 2015 from the Department in relation to issues raised at the meeting of 23 June 2015 and agreed to request further information on a number of areas.

*Noted:* The Committee noted the correspondence dated 7 July 2015 from the Department providing a report on the activities of the first year of the TVR Wildlife Intervention Research Project.

*Agreed:* The Committee considered correspondence from the Department dated 17 July 2015 with regards to an Avian Influenza outbreak in England. The Committee agreed to request that DARD provide a further update on this incident.

*Agreed:* The Committee considered correspondence from the Department dated 21 July 2015 with regards to the outcome of the extended consultation on the Interim Report of the Review of the Implementation of the Welfare of Animals Act (NI) 2011. The Committee agreed to request a written update on any new or revised actions that DARD intends to take as a result of this extended consultation.

*Agreed:* The Committee considered correspondence from the Department of Finance and Personnel dated 17 July 2015 with regards to issues raised by the Committee on the future of Dundonald House. The Committee agreed to request a written briefing to update Members on the DARD Relocation Programme.

*Agreed:* The Committee considered correspondence from the DARD Minister dated 18 August 2015 providing a response to the AFBI 2020 Strategy, outlining the cost savings proposals agreed by the Minister. The Committee agreed to call AFBI to give evidence in connection with the issues raised in this correspondence.

*Noted:* The Committee noted the correspondence dated 19 August 2015 from the Department regarding issues raised at the meeting of 30 June 2015.

## **5. Written Briefing Clerk: Update on the Dairy Industry Crisis**

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

*2.16 p.m. Mr Anderson joined the meeting.*

*2.17 p.m. Mr McCarthy joined the meeting.*

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to write to the Department to request further details on: the two working groups proposed by Liz Truss; on the task the Minister gave to the AFSB regarding proposals to improve the food supply chain; and the aspects of the French proposal dealing with taxation and national insurance that the Minister is attracted to.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed that the Chair write to SoS Liz Truss regarding the recent Package of Measures announced by the EU Commission emphasising that, given the importance to Northern Ireland of the dairy industry, Northern Ireland gets a fair share of any of the monies available particularly under the targeted aid measure.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed that the Chair write to the Minister of HSSPS, drawing attention to recent crisis in Dairy industry, the financial pressures and stresses that many farmers are under leading to mental anguish and ask what measures he is able to make available to assist.

## **6. Oral Briefing NI Agricultural Consultancy Association: New Basic Payment Scheme**

The following representatives joined the meeting at 2.20 p.m.

David Rankin, Chairperson NI Agricultural Consultancy Association

Mary McCormack, Vice Chairperson NI Agricultural Consultancy Association  
Damian McCloskey, NI Agricultural Consultancy Association  
Philip Christie, NI Agricultural Consultancy Association

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

*Mr Irwin declared an interest that he is a farmer.*

*2.41 p.m. Mr Anderson left the meeting.*

*2.43 p.m. Mr Swann left the meeting.*

*2.48 p.m. Mr Byrne left the meeting.*

*2.52 p.m. Mr Poots joined the meeting.*

*2.59 p.m. Mrs Dobson left the meeting.*

*3.02 p.m. Mr McCarthy left the meeting.*

## **7. Oral Briefing DARD: New Basic Payment Scheme**

The following Departmental officials joined the meeting at 3.12p.m.

Pauline Rooney, Acting Director of EU Based Schemes  
Jason Foy, Acting Head of Area-Based Schemes Development Unit  
Richard Crowe, Head of Countryside Management  
John McConnell, Animal ID, Legislation and Welfare Branch  
Paul McGurnaghan, Director of Digital Services

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

*3.33 p.m. Mr Byrne rejoined the meeting.*

*3.33 p.m. Mr Anderson rejoined the meeting.*

*3.36 p.m. Mr Swann rejoined the meeting.*

*3.38 p.m. Mr McAleer left the meeting.*

*Mr Poots declared an interest that he is a farmer.*

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to draft a letter to Northern Ireland's MEPs asking them to arrange to meet with NIACA to discuss issues with the Basic Payment Scheme and lack of flexibility on rules.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed that the Department should provide information on how the Basic Payment Scheme Regulations are interpreted and enforced in other regions of the UK.

3.40 p.m. The officials left the meeting.

3.40 p.m. The NIACA representatives left the meeting.

#### **8. Written Briefing DARD: SL1 The Tuberculosis (Examination & Testing) Scheme (Amendment) Order (NI) 2015**

*Agreed:* The Committee noted the written briefing from the Department on the Tuberculosis (Examination & Testing) Scheme (Amendment) Order (NI) 2015 and agreed that the policy should move to the next legislative stage.

3.43 p.m. Mr Poots left the meeting.

#### **9. SR 2015/282: The Non-Commercial Movement of Pet Animals (Amendment) Order (NI) 2015**

Question put and agreed:

That the Committee for Agriculture and Rural Development has considered SR 2015/282: The Non-Commercial Movement of Pet Animals (Amendment) Order (NI) 2015 and has no objections to the rule.

3.47 p.m. Mr McAleer rejoined the meeting.

#### **10. SR 2015/286: The Common Agricultural Policy Direct Payments and Support Schemes (Cross Compliance) (Amendment) Regulations (NI) 2015**

Question put and agreed:

That the Committee for Agriculture and Rural Development has considered SR 2015/286: The Common Agricultural Policy Direct Payments and Support Schemes (Cross Compliance) (Amendment) Regulations (NI) 2015 and has no objections to the rule.

#### **11. Correspondence**

*Agreed:* The Committee considered correspondence from the Committee for OFMDFM dated 03 July 2015 providing a draft of the main findings of its Inquiry Report into Building a United Community. The Committee agreed to request that DARD identify if it has responsibility for any of the Inquiry headline actions.

- Noted:* The Committee noted correspondence from the Minister dated 09 July 2015 inviting the Chairperson and Deputy Chairperson to a meeting to discuss the timescales for the Rural Proofing Bill and the Fisheries Bill.
- Noted:* The Committee noted the Forest Service 2014-15 Annual Report and Accounts.
- Noted:* The Committee noted the Livestock and Meat Commission 2014-15 Annual Report and Accounts.
- Noted:* The Committee noted the DARD 2014-15 Annual Report and Accounts.
- Noted:* The Committee noted correspondence from the DARD Minister dated 01 July 2015 to the Chairperson of the OFMDFM Committee regarding the NI Public Services Ombudsperson (NIPSO) Bill.
- Noted:* The Committee noted correspondence from the OFMdfM to the OFMdfM Committee detailing the Executive's European Priorities for 2015-16.
- Noted:* The Committee noted correspondence from the Finance and Personnel Committee forwarding an Assembly Research paper detailing the forecasting performance for each department.
- Noted:* The Committee noted correspondence from the Minister for Finance responding to the Finance and Personnel Committee review of 'Sickness Absence in the Northern Ireland Public Sector'.
- Noted:* The Committee noted the Investment Activity Report for DARD.
- Noted:* The Committee noted an invitation to the annual Postgraduate Studentships Seminar at CAFRE Greenmount Campus.
- Noted:* The Committee noted correspondence from the Department detailing the outcome of the consultation on Seed Potatoes Amendment Regulations.
- Noted:* The Committee noted correspondence from the Department detailing its intention to hold an informal consultation on amendments to the Registration of Fish Buyers and Sellers and Designation of Fish Auction Sites Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2005 during the recess period.

*Noted:* The Committee noted correspondence from the Environment Committee inviting Members of the ARD Committee to attend a roundtable discussion on a land strategy, to be held as part of the inaugural Northern Ireland Environment Week.

*Noted:* The Committee noted the Draft Programme for the North American – European Union Agricultural Policy Congress to be hosted by the UFU.

## **12. Forward Work Programme**

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to consider a revised Forward Work Programme at the next Committee meeting.

## **13. AOB**

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed that the Clerk would consult with RalSe to consider what information could be provided on how EU Regulations on the Basic Payment Scheme are interpreted and implemented in other EU Member States.

*3.52 p.m. Mr Poots rejoined the meeting.*

## **14. Date and time of the next meeting**

The next meeting of the Committee for Agriculture and Rural Development will take place on Tuesday 15 September 2015 at 1.30 p.m. in Room 30, Parliament Buildings.

*3.53 p.m. The meeting moved into Closed Session.*

## **15. Inquiry into Better Regulations: RalSe Briefing on Survey Results**

The Committee received a briefing outlining the outcome of the Committee survey on the Inquiry in to Better Regulation.

*3.57 p.m. Mr Poots left the meeting.*

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to reconsider this agenda item at the meeting on 15 September 2015.

*4.02 p.m. The meeting adjourned.*

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William Irwin, Chairperson, Committee for Agriculture and Rural Development

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Date