



**Northern Ireland
Assembly**

**COMMITTEE FOR AGRICULTURE, ENVIRONMENT AND RURAL
AFFAIRS**

MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS

THURSDAY, 08 SEPTEMBER 2016

ROOM 30, PARLIAMENT BUILDINGS

Present: Ms Linda Dillon MLA (Chairperson)
Ms Caoimhe Archibald MLA (Deputy Chairperson)
Mr Sydney Anderson MLA
Mr David Ford MLA
Mr Patsy McGlone MLA
Mr Harold McKee MLA
Mr Oliver McMullan MLA
Mr Edwin Poots MLA
Mr Robin Swann MLA

In Attendance: Mrs Stella McArdle (Assembly Clerk)
Miss Ciara McKay (Assistant Clerk)
Mr Oliver Bellew (Clerical Supervisor)
Ms Marion Johnson (Clerical Officer)
Mr Mark Allen (RAISE, item 7 only)
Ms Suzie Cave (RAISE, item 7 only)

Apologies: Mr William Irwin MLA

The meeting opened in public session at 10:02 a.m.

1. Apologies

As above.

2. Chairperson's Business

Members discussed scheduling arrangements for the Minister's briefing on Thursday 15th September.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Minister to: express concern regarding scheduling arrangements; suggest a structure for the briefing focusing on strategic priorities; and request a second briefing focusing on issues around Brexit.

The Chairperson informed members of a request she had received from the Freshwater Taskforce to meet with the Chair and members of the Committee to discuss its work.

Agreed The Committee agreed to schedule a meeting with the Freshwater Taskforce.

The Chairperson informed members that she accepted an invitation to a reception marking the 67th Anniversary of the founding of the People's Republic of China.

3. Draft Minutes

Agreed: The draft minutes of the meeting on 30th June 2016 were agreed, as amended.

10.13 a.m. Mr Sydney Anderson joined the meeting.

4. Matters Arising

The Committee considered correspondence from the Department, dated 5th July 2016, responding to issues raised at the Committee meeting of 16th June 2016.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to request additional information on infraction risks and ongoing cases; statistics on the extent of the problem caused by Japanese Knotweed; number of applicants to the Young Farmer Payment Scheme course for 2016/17; and to write to the Department to ascertain what 'concerted efforts' it plans to take to meet the Commission's target of online applications by 2017/18 and when it will conclude discussions with other regions.

The Committee considered correspondence from the Department, dated 11th July 2016, responding to queries raised at the Committee meeting of 16th June 2016.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to: write to the Department for information on any changes or amendments it has decided to take as a result of its initial consultation and stakeholder events on the Programme for Government; request a copy of the synopsis of responses to the views/ responses of relevant stakeholders to the consultation and stakeholder events; and to write to UFU, NIAPA, NIEL, RDC and RCN asking that they provide the Committee with a copy of their responses to the PfG consultation.

The Committee considered correspondence from the Department, dated July 2016, responding to queries raised at the Committee meeting of 30th June.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to: defer any discussion about Brexit until the Minister's briefing on Brexit; schedule the SL1 for The Rathlin Island (Prohibition of Fishing Methods) Regulations (NI) 2016 on 15th September, following consideration of the responses to the consultation; and defer consideration of the SL1 on The Foyle Area and Carlingford Area (Exemption from Angling Licence Fees) until the Department gives further consideration to the policy proposals.

The Committee noted correspondence from the Department, dated 29th July 2016, to queries raised during the meeting on 30th June relating to exports to China.

The Committee noted the list of outstanding responses from the Department.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to schedule an oral briefing on the outcome of the Marine Conservation Zone consultation; and to request from the Department whether this briefing could also cover information on exclusion zones around the Fairhead Tidal Energy project.

Ms Caoimhe Archibald made a declaration that she is a Member of the Society of Irish Plant Pathologists.

5. Oral briefing from Ulster Farmers Union – Strategic Priorities

10.18 a.m. The following witnesses joined the meeting:

Mr Wesley Aston, Chief Executive Officer;

Mr Barclay Bell, President;

Mr Victor Chestnutt, Deputy President; and

Mr Ivor Ferguson, Deputy President.

The witnesses briefed the Committee on the strategic priorities of the Ulster Farmers Union.

11.08 a.m. Mr Edwin Poots joined the meeting.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to request from the Ulster Farmer's Union: that it keep the Committee updated on its position on productive based systems as a potential replacement for the Basic Payment Scheme; further detailed information on the range of issues that UFU have with NIEA in connection with the expansion/development of pig and poultry houses; further information on thinking around a potential pillar III set of measures to address volatility in the farming sector; and further detailed information on the issue it raised around public procurement.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to seek clarification from NIEA on: its input to the planning process and its role in respect of applications for extensions / new build of pig and poultry

houses; how it deals with complaints from residents on smell ‘pollution’; restrictions on the size of such units; and the number and location of such cases.

11.33 a.m. The witnesses left the meeting.

11.33 a.m. Ms Caoimhe Archibald left the meeting.

11.33 a.m. Mr Oliver McMullan left the meeting.

6. Oral briefing from Forest Service – Business Plan

11.33 a.m. The following officials joined the meeting:

Mr Malcolm Beattie, Chief Executive Officer, Forest Service; and

Mr Marcus McAuley, Forest Service.

The officials briefed the Committee on the Business Plan of the Forest Service.

11.36 a.m. Mr Oliver McMullan re-joined the meeting.

11.39 a.m. Miss Caoimhe Archibald re-joined the meeting.

Mr David Ford made a declaration that visitors to Tardee Forest walk on a small section of his land.

11.56 a.m. Mr Edwin Poots left the meeting.

Agreed: The Forest Service agreed to provide to the Committee the number of sites that are affected by the 80 outbreaks of ash dieback.

12.12 p.m. Mr Edwin Poots re-joined the meeting.

Agreed: An invitation was issued to the Committee to visit a forest. The Committee agreed to schedule this on its Forward Work Programme at a later date.

12.13 p.m. The officials left the meeting.

7. Oral briefing from RaISe – Possible models for the UK-EU relationship post Brexit

12.14 p.m. The Committee was briefed by Assembly’s Research and Information Services on the possible models for the UK-EU relationship post Brexit.

12.52 p.m. Mr Sydney Anderson left the meeting.

12.55 p.m. The officials left the meeting.

Agreed: Officials agreed to provide to the Committee a list of the titles of future RaISe briefings, including a brief description of what each will cover; and to consider in subsequent papers issues

relating to fisheries and the regulations and fines under the Oskar Agreement.

8. Written briefing DAERA – Application to the World Health Organisations for Animal Health (OIE) for BSE NR Status

The Committee noted a written briefing by the Department in relation to its proposed application to the World Health Organisations for Animal Health (OIE) for BSE Negligible Risk status.

12.56 p.m. Mr Oliver McMullan left the meeting.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that it was content that the Department proceed with the proposal to apply to the OIE for BSE Negligible Risk Status in Northern Ireland.

1.00 p.m. Mr Patsy McGlone left the meeting.

9. Written briefing DAERA – NSMC Study on residential solid fuel and air pollution

The Committee noted a written briefing by the Department in relation to the North South Ministerial Council study on residential fuel and air pollution.

Agreed: The Committee requested a written briefing to ascertain how the Department intends to proceed with implementing the report's recommendations. The Committee also requested: information on whether the report covered pollution arising from road traffic / motor vehicles; and that the Department clarify the report's consideration in respect of burning biomass.

10. S.R. 2016/244 The Seed Marketing Regulations (NI) 2016

Agreed: The Committee considered S.R. 2016/244 The Seed Marketing Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2016 and, subject to the Examiner of Statutory Rules' report, has no objection to the rule.

11. S.R. 2016/259 The Plant Health (Amendment) Order (NI) 2016

Agreed: The Committee considered S.R. 2016/259 The Plant Health (Amendment) Order (Northern Ireland) 2016 and, subject to the Examiner of Statutory Rules' report, has no objection to the rule.

12. S.R. 2016/309 The Pollution Prevention and Control (Industrial Emissions) (Amendment) Regulations (NI) 2016

Agreed: The Committee considered S.R. 2016/309 The Pollution Prevention and Control (Industrial Emissions) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2016 and, subject to the Examiner of Statutory Rules' report, has no objection to the rule.

13. Correspondence

The Committee noted correspondence from the Department on Water Utility Compliance for 2014 and 2015.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to forward this correspondence to the Committee for Infrastructure.

The Committee noted correspondence from the Department on the publication of its consultation on the consolidation of the Producer Responsibility Obligations.

The Committee noted correspondence from the Committee for the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister, providing a copy of a RaISE paper on Outcomes-based Government.

The Committee noted correspondence from NICCY on its advice to the Executive on its draft Programme for Government.

The Committee noted correspondence from Mr Cormac McAleer regarding a proposal for a Committee inquiry.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to consider topics for an inquiry at its planning session on 29th September 2016.

The Committee noted correspondence from 'Planet Earth' regarding energy issues and the environmental impact.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to forward this correspondence to the Department for a direct response to the correspondent on the issues raised.

The Committee noted correspondence regarding the unsustainability of palm oil.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the correspondent, seeking permission to forward this email to the Department for a direct response.

The Committee noted correspondence from the Department on the publication of the UK Government's consultation on a "Simpler, Better Energy and Carbon Reporting framework".

Agreed: The Committee agree to request the Department's response to this consultation, the outcome of the consultation and any potential impacts to Northern Ireland.

The Committee noted Friends of the Earth's Northern Ireland newsletter.

The Committee noted correspondence on the Ulster Bank's Skills and Opportunities Fund.

The Committee noted the Northern Ireland Environment Agency's Annual Report and Accounts 2015-16.

The Committee noted the Centre for Cross Border Studies Report “A Study of Cross-Border Flows within the Agri-food Sector”.

The Committee noted Forest Service’s Annual Report and Accounts 2015-16.

The Committee noted the Committee on Climate Change’s report “Meeting Carbon Budgets: 2016 Progress Reports”.

The Committee noted the Department of the Environment’s Annual Report and Accounts 2015-16.

The Committee noted a number of papers provided by Northern Ireland Environment Link, as referred to during its briefing to the Committee on 30th June on the impact of Brexit.

The Committee noted the Department’s publication “NI Agri-food Sector – Key Statistics June 2016”.

The Committee noted the Committee on Climate Change Annual Report and Accounts 2015-16.

The Committee noted the following publications from the Department:

- The Greenhouse Gas Emissions Charging Scheme (NI) 2016;
- The Pollution Prevention and Control (Industrial Emissions) NIEA Charging Scheme 2016;
- The Radioactive Substance (Fees and Charges) Scheme (NI) 2016;
- The Waste Management Charging (NI) Scheme 2016;
- A Scheme of Fees and Charges to Recover the Costs of Processing Licence Applications under the Water Abstraction and Impoundment (Licensing) Regulations (NI) 2006; and
- Fees and Charges to recover the Cost of Processing Discharge Consent Applications and the Regulation of Discharges under Water (NI) Order 1999.

The Committee noted the Department of Agriculture and Rural Development’s Annual Report and Accounts for the year ended 31 March 2016.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department to request further information on the qualification in the report relating to EU disallowances.

The Committee noted ISNI’s Delivery Tracking System Activity Report for DAERA for July 2016.

The Committee noted EU Matters 03/2016.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department for an update on the distribution of money to Northern Ireland referred to in the newsletter.

The Committee noted the NIEOB's Brussels Report.

The Committee noted the Loughs Agency Annual Report covering the period 1 January 2014 to 31 December 2014.

The Committee noted ISNI's Delivery Tracking System Activity Report for DAERA for August 2016.

The Committee noted an invitation to the launch of the Climate Change Risk Assessment Evidence Report.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to send a member of RaISe to the launch and to report back to the Committee.

The Committee noted an invitation to DAERA's Postgraduate Studentships Seminar 2016.

The Committee noted an invite to Business in the Community's Tomorrow's World Summit.

The Committee noted an invite to the British Heart Foundation's NI Parliamentary Event.

The Committee noted the programme for NIAF's Conference "From Recovery to Growth".

The Committee noted the invitation to the launch of Northern Ireland Environment Week.

The Committee noted the programme for Environment Ireland's 12th Annual Conference.

The Committee noted an invitation to Coca-Cola's bottling plant in Lisburn.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to consider this invitation as part of its wider consideration of the Forward Work Programme at the Committee's planning day on 19th September 2016.

The Committee noted the programme for Oxford Real Farming's conference.

14. Forward Work Programme

The Committee noted the draft Forward Work Programme.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to schedule oral briefings from the following organisations: AFBI; Livestock Meat Commission; Loughs Agency; NI Meat Exporters Association; NIEL; Anglo-North Irish Fish Producers Organisation; Northern Ireland Fish Producers; Dairy UK NI; rural affairs groups; Young Farmers' Club; and NIRTA.

The Committee noted research from Rural Support on the Health and Social Effects of the Agricultural Downturn in Northern Ireland.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to schedule an oral briefing from Rural Support.

The Committee noted the itinerary for the visit to the National Ploughing Championships and the Grange Research Centre.

Agreed: Members agreed to advise the Committee team of their intentions in relation to participating in this visit in light of plenary business scheduled for Tuesday 20th September.

The Committee noted the agenda for Northern Ireland Environment Week.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that banners could be displayed along the railings of Parliament Buildings to mark Northern Ireland Environment Week.

15. Any other business

There was no other business.

16. Date, time and place of next meeting

The Committee noted that its next meeting will be held at 10.00 a.m. on Thursday 15th September 2016 in Room 30, Parliament Buildings.

1.15 p.m. The Chairperson adjourned the meeting.

Linda Dillon MLA

Chairperson, Committee for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs

15th September 2016