



**Northern Ireland
Assembly**

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

MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS

THURSDAY, 6 OCTOBER 2016

ROOM 30, PARLIAMENT BUILDINGS

- Present: Ms Linda Dillon MLA (Chairperson)
Ms Caoimhe Archibald MLA (Deputy Chairperson)
Mr Sydney Anderson MLA
Mr Maurice Bradley MLA
Mr David Ford MLA
Mr William Irwin MLA
Mr Harold McKee MLA
Mr Oliver McMullan MLA
Mr Edwin Poots MLA
Mr Robin Swann MLA
- In Attendance: Mrs Stella McArdle (Assembly Clerk)
Mrs Liz Marsh (Assistant Clerk)
Mr Oliver Bellew (Clerical Supervisor)
Ms Marion Johnson (Clerical Officer)
Miss Zoe Rogers (Bursary Student)
- Apologies: Mr Patsy McGlone MLA

The meeting opened in public session at 10.02 a.m.

1. Apologies

As above.

10.03 a.m. Miss Caoimhe Archibald joined the meeting

2. Chairperson's business

The Chairperson updated members on the informal meeting between members of the Committee and the Freshwater Taskforce which took place on 22 September 2016.

3. Draft Minutes

Agreed: The draft minutes of the meeting on 22nd September 2016 were agreed.

4. Matters Arising

The Committee noted correspondence from the PSNI in relation to applications for firearms.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to request a write to the PSNI to seek further information on the PSNI's engagement with stakeholders and how its proposals are in line with the spirit of the Rural Needs Act.

The Committee noted a written response from the Department in relation to the Faughan River fish kill on 2 August 2016.

The Committee noted correspondence from the Department in relation to issues raised at the Committee meeting on 8 September 2016.

Agreed: That relevant information on NIEA input to the planning process for pig and poultry houses be forward to the UFU.

Agreed: That further information received from UFU on the NIEA input to the planning process for pig and poultry houses be forward to the Department for further comment.

The Committee noted correspondence from the Department in relation to issues raised at the Committee meeting on 15 September 2016.

10.00 a.m. Mr Sydney Anderson and Mr Maurice Bradley joined the meeting.

5. Oral briefing from DAERA – Agri-Food Strategy Board update

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

Mr Tony O'Neill, Chairperson, Agri-Food Strategy Board

Mr Ian Marshall, Member, Agri-Food Strategy Board

Mr Trevor Lockhart, Agri-Food Strategy Board

The witnesses briefed the Committee on the progress the functions of the Board.

10.29 a.m. Mr William Irwin and Mr Edwin Poots joined the meeting.

10.48 a.m. Mr Robin Swann left the meeting.

10.53 a.m. Mr Robin Swann re-joined the meeting.

11.13 a.m. Mr Sydney Anderson left the meeting.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that, given the cross-over in remit, a copy of the progress report and the Hansard of the briefing be sent to the Committee for the Economy for information.

11.32 a.m. The officials left the meeting.

11.32 a.m. Miss Caoimhe Archibald left the meeting.

11.32 a.m. Mr William Irwin left the meeting.

6. Oral briefing from RaISe – NI Agri-Food Sector – Background and possible Brexit considerations

11.32 a.m. The following official joined the meeting:

Mr Mark Allen, Research and Information Services, NI Assembly

The official briefed the Committee on the background and possible Brexit considerations for the Northern Ireland Agri-Food sector.

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

11.46 a.m. Mr Sydney Anderson re-joined the meeting.

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

11.51 a.m. Mr William Irwin and Mr Edwin Poots re-joined the meeting.

11.57 a.m. Mr Robin Swann left the meeting.

12.14 p.m. The official left the meeting.

12.14 p.m. Mr David Ford left the meeting.

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

Agreed: The Committee agreed to forward a copy of the research paper to the Department for information.

7. Oral briefing from DAERA – Online as Primary Communication to Farmers

12.15 p.m The following officials joined the meeting:

Mr Paul McGurnaghan – Digital Services Division

Ms Pauline Rooney – EU Area Based Schemes

Mr David Lynch – EU Area Based Schemes

The officials briefed the Committee on the issue of online as the primary source for communication with farmers.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to request written clarification of the claim that 80% of farm businesses are likely to have access to fixed line broadband speeds of 2 megabits per second, and of the percentage of rural dwellings with access to broadband. The Committee also agreed to request an update on how the increase in online applications is expected to impact on staff numbers.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to receive a demonstration on the online Single Application Form process before Christmas 2016.

12.24 p.m. Mr Robin Swann re-joined the meeting.

12.26 p.m. Mr David Ford re-joined the meeting.

Mr Poots declared an interest in relation to the Basic Payment.

12.39 p.m. Mr William Irwin left the meeting.

12.42 p.m. The officials left the meeting.

8. Written briefing DAERA – Policy on Quiet Areas and Designation of Areas

The Committee noted a written briefing by the Department in relation to policy on quiet areas and designation of areas.

9. Written briefing DAERA – the Environmental Better Regulation (2016 Act) (Commencement No.2) Order (Northern Ireland) 2016

Agreed: The Committee noted the Environmental Better Regulation (2016 Act) (Commencement No.2) Order (Northern Ireland) 2016.

10. Correspondence

The Committee noted a copy of a briefing paper entitled 'After the EU Referendum: Establishing the Best Outcome for Northern Ireland' which had been forwarded by the Committee for the Executive Office.

The Committee noted a memo by the Committee for the Executive Office requesting a response from all statutory committees to the draft Programme for Government.

The Committee noted the EU Matters Issue 04/16 newsletter.

The Committee noted correspondence from the National Trust in relation to strategic issues.

The Committee noted correspondence from Planet Earth in relation to illegal animal body parts.

The Committee noted the fourth report of the Examiner of Statutory Rules.

The Committee noted the ISNI Delivery Tracking System report for September 2016.

The Committee noted correspondence from the Committee for Finance advising that it did not envisage a draft budget being presented to the Assembly for scrutiny but that it may be brought forward in December or early January.

The Committee noted the Annual Report and Accounts of the Livestock and Meat Commission.

The Committee noted correspondence from the Freight Transport Association in relation to HGV driving license acquisition for the farming community.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to forward a copy of the correspondence to the Department for a direct response to the FTA.

11. Forward Work Programme

The Clerk briefed members on a potential visit to the Mobuoy and Ballykelly sites.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to hold a meeting and visit on 24th November 2016 in connection with the NIEA Business Plan and Framework document, and on illegal dumping and waste crime, followed by visits to the Mobuoy and Ballykelly sites.

Agreed: It was agreed that input from Tourism NI on Environmental Tourism would be sought. It was also agreed that the Clerk would seek further information in relation to the October Monitoring Round.

The Committee agreed its Forward Work Programme.

12. Any other business

There was no other business.

13. Date, time and place of next meeting

The Committee noted that its next meeting will be held at 10.00 a.m. on Thursday 13th October 2016 in Room 30, Parliament Buildings.

12.50 p.m. The Chairperson adjourned the meeting.

Linda Dillon MLA

Chairperson, Committee for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs

13th October 2016