

AERA Committee Meeting Covid-19 Update - Wednesday 15 April 2020

EMFG – FISHERIES ISSUES

Fisheries - Sea Fishing Sector

- On 3 April the Minister announced that the Department would proceed with a scheme of financial support for the sea fish catching sector.
- This will require secondary legislation made under section 15 of the Fisheries Act 1981. An SL1 for the Committee's consideration was submitted on 7th April. The Committee has raised a number of questions about the scheme, which EMFG will attempt to answer.
- Some vessels continue to fish where there is a market for their catch but overall activity is greatly reduced due to the severe drop in demand for fish.

Aquaculture Sector

- There has also been a severe drop in sales of aquaculture products as a result of COVID-19. A separate scheme is currently being investigated to support this sector.
- As a result of the drop in sales, increased stocking densities may increase welfare and disease issues. The Department is actively engaging with the sector on this.

Inland Fisheries

- Lough Neagh Fishing Co-operative Society has now suspended its fishing operations due to the markets closing down and also in response to concerns over the health and welfare of staff.
- The Department is currently considering what additional measures to support the Lough Neagh fishermen can be put in place at this time, other than those already outlined by the Government.
- Angling at the public angling estate waters has now been closed and fishermen have been advised to stay at home at this time and not to go fishing.

Update on Essential Legislation: UK Fisheries Bill

- DEFRA expects the Devolved Administrations to have had the Legislative Consent Motions debated in their respective assemblies before the Third Reading of the Bill in the first House at Westminster.
- The Minister laid the Legislative Consent Memorandum for the Fisheries Bill in the Business Office on 23 March 2020. No date has been scheduled for its Legislative Consent Motion in the Assembly.
- The dates for the Report Stage and Final Reading for the Fisheries Bill at Westminster have not yet been scheduled.

- Should Report Stage be delayed due to COVID-19/longer recess period (note: this has not been confirmed), this could impact on the timing of the Legislative Consent Motion in the Assembly.

Update on Essential Finance or Budget information

- The Department's bid of £1.5m for Covid 19 funding to support the sea fishing sector has been met.

NIEA & EMFG – ENVIRONMENT ISSUES

Waste management collection, storage and processing

Along with continuing the key public health messages from last week, the key message this week has been to continue recycling while warning against fly-tipping during the Covid-19 pandemic. Cardboard, plastic and glass are vital resources in package production across the food and retail sectors and continuing to recycle is vital for the supply chain.

The warning about fly-tipping used the 'Right Place, Right Waste' theme asking the public not to intensify the burden on our public health services by placing our waste in the right bin. Don't dump unwanted waste, it's that simple.

These key messages were communicated through Ministerial tweets including a video message and a statement from the Minister all of which had significant reach and engagement on social media. The information was also disseminated through the DAERA website and NI Direct with many Councils also sharing the message.

A range of COVID-19 Regulatory Position Statements have been prepared by NIEA to ensure pragmatism and flexibility in the waste sector (e.g. Authorised Waste Facilities – Temporary variation of licence/permit conditions).

With the reduction in waste services and increased household waste there is an increased risk of illegal dumping/fly-tipping. The Department is working closely with local councils on this matter. The NI Direct fly-tipping page has been updated regarding reporting of wasted crime while the Minister also made reference to fly-tipping in his Easter message.

Engagement between DAERA, local councils and the waste industry continues.

Water Quality

All reports of water pollution received via the 24hr hotline 0800 807060 and email Emergency-Pollution@daera-ni.gov.uk are being logged, triaged and where appropriate investigated. Duty officers make an assessment of the pollution severity based upon the details provided.

To help with this assessment anyone who wishes to report pollution is being asked to forward any supporting photographs / videos to the above email address after calling. Depending on the

location and/or the severity assigned, some low risk incidents may not be responded to immediately to avoid unnecessary travel.

These incidents will be logged and followed up at a later date. Any incident assigned a medium or high severity will be investigated as per normal procedures with additional measures put in place to ensure social distancing requirements are maintained.

Future Viability of Environmental NGOs

Northern Ireland Environment Link have issued a Coronavirus Impact Survey to Environment and Conservation Organisations in Northern Ireland – responses are due by close on Friday 10 April.

Senior Management from NIEA and the Environment, Marine and Fisheries Group met with representatives of the eNGO sector on 9 April to discuss environmental issues and priority needs in the current Covid 19 landscape.

It is important that the eNGO sector remains resilient, retaining capacity and expertise, to continue to deliver key environmental outcomes. DAERA will be considering the needs, sources of funding available and whether further action is required.

Country Parks and Nature Reserves

NIEA visitor centres, cafes, mobile concessions and public toilet facilities remain closed. Where possible vehicle access to sites has also been closed. These measures have resulted in a significant reduction in visitors but have caused some issues with vehicles parking on roads and verges outside sites. Such issues remain a matter for PSNI, however liaison between NIEA and PSNI is ongoing.

Pedestrian access remains to most sites and accordingly work is still being undertaken to maintain safe public access as far as possible. There is a risk that the Easter break could see people congregating in Country Parks in breach of social distancing advice. NIEA will maintain a presence at Country Parks and will continue to liaise closely with the PSNI over the course of the Easter period providing up to date information on individual sites where issues may be emerging.

Disposal of Animal By Products (ABP)

To date no significant impact on rendering capacity is being seen at present. Discussions are ongoing within DAERA in relation to potential impact and intervention that may be required and a Forum is being held weekly to review the rendering situation.

Storage of Tallow

Our understanding is that there are still a number of routes to market for tallow both in GB and ROI and at this stage no problems are being reported. Tallow is considered to be both an animal by-product and an oil, at present any site used for storage of tallow must be fully compliant with the relevant legislative requirements including both the Oil Storage Regulations and any animal by products approvals. The Department is aware of a number of storage options and is further exploring these should an emergency situation arise.

Air Quality

Officials are continually reviewing air quality to ensure that an air pollution alert can be issued in the event that high levels of air pollution are experienced and/or forecast.

Regulatory Position Statements

NIEA is continuing to develop Covid 19 Regulatory Position Statements. There has been no requirement to issue any at present, and these will be held in draft pending issue.

Carrier Bag Levy

Following potential risks identified of the spread of Covid 1919 due to home deliveries, The Single Use Carrier Bags Charge (Coronavirus Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2020 were made and came into operation on 1 April.

Implementation of the amendment Regulation is ongoing with continued liaison between the levy team and the N.I. retail sector.

Update on Essential Legislation: Environment Bill

Parliamentary scrutiny of the Environment Bill remains suspended until at least 28 April. At this stage, no further information is available regarding a likely date for resumption of scrutiny.

Update on Essential Finance or Budget information

A bid was made for Covid 19 funding to support local councils and the waste sector. Under initial proposals from the Finance Minister no Covid 19 funding has been provided. The Department will continue to work with councils to support waste communications and has allocated £200k for this purpose.

NILGA has written to the Finance Minister seeking a financial support package to cover additional costs for waste management as a result of Covid-19. DAERA officials are working with NILGA to ensure a firm evidence base for any support that is forthcoming and to avoid duplication.

Rural Affairs, Forestry Service & Estate Transformations Group

Rural Affairs Division

Rural affairs continues to focus on payments processing and supporting partners. Work continues on the draft Rural Policy Framework.

DAERA DIRECT OFFICES

Staff continue to work in the DAERA Direct office on essential services whilst maintaining social distancing. Arrangements continue to be made to allow more key personnel to work from home where possible.

TACKLING RURAL POVERTY AND SOCIAL ISOLATION (TRPSI)

TRPSI funded initiatives continue to proactively deliver support to rural dwellers.

Rural Support

Rural Support continue to deal with calls and offer support.

Role of Rural Community Transport Partnership (RCTP's)

Through the TRPSI Programme, DAERA officials, in conjunction with DfI and the RCTP's, are compiling a comprehensive list of activities that RCTP's are undertaking in their local areas.

SPRING Social Prescribing Project

No change.

Rural Community Development Support Service

The Rural Support Networks have been identified as delivery partners by Councils and all are involved in the community response.

Rural Community Network (RCN) and NI Rural Women's Network (NIRWN)

No change.

EU LEADER PROGRAMME, TOURISM AND PROJECT STRATUM LEADER

Councils advise that £12.6m of funding to rural Businesses, the Community and Voluntary Sector and Councils is currently affected due to COVID-19 advice. Supply chains for businesses have been disrupted and work within the construction sector on non-essential

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infrastructure has ceased. DAERA will continue to work closely with LAGs and Councils to maintain a flexible approach.

An online Rural Tourism assessment panel was held on the 3rd April 2020, and this saw another project successfully achieve over the pass mark. A letter of offer worth £500k has now been issued to the respective Council.

PROJECT STRATUM

Work by bidders to the tender continues with a closing date of 5 May 2020, after which the bids will be technically appraised and assessed. The project is still on target to issue a contract this financial year.

PROCESSING OF GRANT AID CLAIMS

In the last two weeks of March just over £1.69m of funding has been submitted by Councils to the Department for payment. This funding is to be paid to rural businesses, Community Voluntary Sector and to Councils.

In the Tackling Rural Poverty and Social Isolation (TRPSI) Programme since 16 March 84 small rural businesses received payment totalling over £274k while 138 applicants to the Rural Micro Capital Grant Scheme received payments totalling £176k from the Tackling Rural Poverty and Social Isolation Programme.

RURAL POLICY – RECOVERY

Work continues on a draft Rural Policy Framework.

UPDATE ON ESSENTIAL FINANCE OR BUDGET INFORMATION

The impact on the Budget continues to be monitored.

Questions from the Assembly Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs Committee, which require responses below. (If the updates above have answered these questions already, please indicate that below.)

Question : DAERA Direct Offices: have staff been given the option to work from home where possible, bearing in mind that the closure of the livestock marts will substantially reduce the need for DAERA Direct face-to-face services?

Answer: The answer to this question is contained in the information above.

Question : Do the offices employ temp or agency staff & if so are they being treated in the same manner?

Answer: Yes.

Question : Farm Family Health Checks Programme: is consideration being given to utilising this programme especially the mobile van for COVID-19 testing in isolated rural areas?

Answer: The Northern Health and Social Care Trust (NHSCT) lead on the delivery of the Farm Families Health Checks service across Northern Ireland and following consultation with DAERA and the Public Health Agency took the decision to suspend the service on the basis that the nursing resource could be best utilised elsewhere in the response to Covid 19. The vehicle layout also makes social distancing difficult. NHSCT are aware of the capacity issues with the FFHC vehicle and will keep its potential functionality under review as the Covid 19 situation continues to develop.

Estate Transformation Division

In response to COVID-19 the Department has temporarily closed its Headquarters buildings at Ballykelly House, Ballykelly and the Klondyke Building in Belfast city centre. Dundonald House remains open as a Headquarters location in order that essential Department staff can work from it if required.

As stated above all DAERA Direct Offices remain open to staff. This is in order to support the food supply essential functions of trade certification, identification, registration and movement of animals and Tuberculosis testing.

Where staff remain working within DAERA Direct Offices and other DAERA buildings social distancing has been put in place within the local offices. Furthermore where required, staff rotas have been introduced to reduce the number of staff in offices and to facilitate social distancing. Additional laptops are also being sought so that more staff can work from home.

Public access to the Department's forests and country parks has been restricted as far as possible with car parks closed to all vehicles, playparks and on-site toilet facilities closed along with camping amenities, museums, mobile concessions and visitor centres.

Throughout this period the Department has sought to follow guidance provided by the Public Health Agency (PHA) and the NI Civil Service on measures to take to help prevent the spread of COVID-19. Original action taken across the DAERA estate by premises teams included ensuring that PHA COVID 19 posters were prominently displayed; adequate supplies of soap and towels were available for staff to carry out good hand hygiene practices; and that cleaning was focussed on the high traffic communal areas.

The Department is also currently working with DOF in order to ensure that essential maintenance works etc. can be carried out during this period on key DAERA buildings including those which may be of use in responding to COVID-19.

Forest Service

Current public health advice is strongly recommending the reduction of social contact and the restriction of all non-essential movements and in keeping with this, particular consideration is needed in relation to the range of facilities and land managed by Forest Service for public use or with public access. As a result all forest parks have been closed to vehicular access, as well as caravan and camping and associated facilities.

These closures will be in place until the end of May in the interests of public safety in line with government guidance regarding the risk of spread of Covid-19 (coronavirus). The situation will be

reviewed at the end of May taking account of the most up to date Public Health Agency and Government advice at that time.

As a result of these actions people travelling to visit forests has reduced significantly. Forest Service is continuing to monitor usage of the forests and liaise closely with the PSNI to highlight any areas of concern, particularly where there is a build up of vehicles at forest entrances.

As highlighted by the Minister in his 8 April statement, Easter is traditionally one of the busiest times of the year for visits to DAERA forests and he has urged people to stay at home and not to visit the forests at this time. Monitoring of forest parks and close liaison with the PSNI will continue over the Easter period with the sharing of up to date information on sites where issues may be emerging.

Forest Service is working with representatives from the Department for Communities and local councils to support transportation of food boxes to the most vulnerable people. Work is ongoing to deploy staff and vehicles in assistance with this critical and essential work.

Supporting the food supply chain is a critical element of DAERA's work and Forest Service contribute through the supply of timber to the pallet and wood packaging processors for transportation of food and other essential goods. Smaller diameter log packages have been prioritised and been made available to the sawmills sector which are particularly suitable for harvesting to meet this market requirement.

Food & Farming Group

Single Application

- On 30 March 2020, the Minister confirmed that the closing date for the 2020 Single Application would remain as 15 May 2020. Northern Ireland is the only region in the United Kingdom which makes direct payments in October. Any extension to the application period could delay payments in October 2020. However, the period during which farmers can amend claims without penalty has been extended to 09 June 2020.
- By 8 April, over 7,100 farm business had submitted their SAF, an increase of 65% from the same period last year.
- Orchard House has closed and DAERA Direct offices are closed to the public. Area-based Schemes Division staff are working from home to provide an enhanced SAF Advisory Service. Action is being taken to give additional staff the ability to work from home to ensure continuity of this service. A service has also been put in place for DAERA staff to submit Single Applications online for applicants who have no broadband or access to I.T. equipment who would have availed of a Digital Assistance appointment in their local DAERA Direct office in the previous scheme year.
- A derogation has been put in place to remove the Greening crop diversification requirement for 2020 because of adverse weather conditions earlier in the year. This is in line with action taken by England, Scotland and Wales. Other Greening requirements remain.

Agri-food sector

1. While supply chains are still working effectively there remains significant concerns across all stakeholders that staff availability for work will decline quickly as fear of contracting the virus grows among workforce. Calls were made to have some level of quick testing for staff following self-isolation before returning to work and to have specific advice on how best to check/screen staff entering the workplace.

Position – DAERA raised this through the C3 structures and FSA also raised this directly with DoH.

2. In addition there is concern at the lack of specific advice for agri-food sector workers on Covid H&S measures and calls were made for suitable protocols to be developed. NIFDA and NIMEA have developed protocols with input from FSA, DAERA and other agencies.

Position – Businesses are each putting their own measures in place to protect and reassure staff in line with current guidance on the GOV.UK website.

3. Financial pressures are increasing rapidly across supply chains as markets adapt to the changing trading environment. For example, loss of food service markets, certain export markets, reduced productivity in processing plants and increases in some input costs like animal feed. Industry is calling for financial support measures including grants, rates

relief, loans and EU (CMO) schemes. Such support would involve government, lending institutions and a good deal of forbearance by creditors.

Position – DAERA are working closely with industry and banks to assess the potential impacts on the supply chain, to keep products moving where possible and to explore mitigation measures where this is not possible.

4. Concern growing about the potential for a build-up of livestock on farms (particularly in the intensive sectors) and or products e.g. milk. A combination of reduced processing speed (due to implementing social distancing measures in plants), lack of market outlets (including for animal by products) and lack of storage availability for finished product means that pressure is being put back on farms to hold stock and/ or dump product (milk a real concern – reports on 7 April on BBC of milk being dumped in slurry tank in GB).

Position – DAERA are alive to all the issues and are in regular contact with industry representatives and with DEFRA and the other Devolved Administrations to explore options.

5. Many horticulture businesses producing and selling spring bedding plants, cut flowers and ornamentals rely on sales at this time of year through Garden Centres, DIY stores and other outlets that are currently closed. There is a narrow window for sales and a short shelf life for the product with 60% of annual sales occurring in spring. These businesses face huge financial loss.

Position - Minister Poots has asked for Executive colleagues to consider how sales of such produce could be facilitated in line with social distancing guidelines.

6. As with private sector workers, there is concern that a shortage of workers in key roles within Government/Agencies with statutory inspection roles to protect public health, could lead to a slow down or halt in processing capacity. This would limit not only the amount of product available but also have knock on effects at farm level, e.g. animal welfare issues due to build-up of livestock or non-collection of milk.

Position – DAERA are reprioritising workstreams in light of the pressures created by Covid 19.

7. NI livestock markets took the decision to shut (initially for 2 weeks) in an attempt to raise the importance of social distancing among farmers. This followed continued high numbers of farmers attending markets despite warnings and pleas from farming unions. Other means of sale will be explored including virtual sales, buyer only markets and specialist sales.

Position - DAERA are working with the markets to ensure livestock movements can be facilitated by a combination of Aphis on-line and telephony services. Markets have developed protocols in conjunction with DAERA and HSE and plan to introduce a range of virtual and speciality buyer-only sales in coming weeks as a pilot exercise. The process of returning to normal sales will be a gradual one in line with government guidance.

College of Agriculture, Food and Rural Enterprise (CAFRE)

- Education programmes at the College of Agriculture, Food and Rural Enterprise (CAFRE) are continuing with remote delivery of learning materials and

currently all students are actively engaging with college lecturing staff to ensure the academic year is completed and students achieve their qualifications.

- CAFRE Knowledge Advisory Service Advisers and Technologists are available to provide advisory support to the Northern Ireland Agri-Food industry to assist farmers and food businesses with technical, business and environmental advice during the COVID-19 crisis.
- CAFRE have recently launched the European Innovation Partnerships (EIP) scheme which is designed to help farmers work collaboratively with experts to address the practical issues or opportunities they are facing on their farms. The scheme is currently open for applications until Monday 27 April 2020.
- Arrangements have been agreed to facilitate the use of CAFRE's residential facilities by the Department of Health as part of their contingency planning with a number of health workers already using Enniskillen and Greenmount Campuses for overnight accommodation.
- CAFRE have made available over 20,000 coveralls and other Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) to the Health and Social Care Trusts and colleagues in Veterinary Service Animal Health Group some of which have already been collected.

Rural Development Programme

- Officials are assessing the impacts of Covid-19 on Rural Development Programme schemes and considering advice from the European Commission. The DAERA website will be updated regularly. In the meantime, applications can continue to be made subject to individual scheme deadlines

Central Services and Contingency Planning Group

CSCPG input is provided in the questions section below and there will be a separate budget report to the Committee.

Veterinary Service & Animal Health Group

Covid-19 Update

- **Delivery of official controls:** The delivery of official controls at slaughter houses including ante and post mortem inspections and verification of compliance with animal, health and welfare requirements continues.
- In agreement with FSA NI and in consultation with industry, it has been necessary to suspend inspections of specified risk material, unannounced inspections and audits of food businesses until the end of June 2020.
- Work is ongoing to introduce Private Veterinary Practitioners into Food Businesses to assist with meat inspection.
- While routine food and feed inspections have paused, essential sampling work including raw milk and eggs for the National Residue Control Plan and C1 cereal seed for certification continues ensuring that Public Health guidance on COVID-19 is followed.
- It should be noted that the pausing of routine official control inspections will impact over time on meeting target risk based delivery of official controls. To mitigate, alternative methods to deliver checks on compliance with legislation are being developed in consultation with industry and the FSA.
- **Bovine TB Programme:**
 - On 30th March 2020, the Minister announced that, in general, bTB testing should not take place except in exceptional circumstances, which are based upon the primacy of public health requirements. DAERA's view is that most tests will not be able to be conducted in line with Public Health Agency guidance but there may be individual exceptions where the vet and herd keeper are absolutely satisfied that the Public Health Agency guidance can be observed for each and every animal presented.
 - On 9th April 2020, the Minister announced that herd restrictions would not come into effect until 35 days after a test has become overdue. This is an extension of 28 days from the existing grace period of 7 days and is intended to **help those herds that are not currently under a TB restriction to continue to trade as normally as possible during these difficult times.** Once a herd restriction is applied, in exceptional circumstances, farmers may apply to DAERA for a licence to move cattle off the holding. A licence is not currently required for moves directly to slaughter.
 - Until further advised, keepers will not be referred to the paying agency for overdue TB tests if they and/or their PVP advise DAERA that the test could not be completed during the testing window for reasons associated with the COVID-19 pandemic.
 - The position with regard to TB testing throughout the UK is being kept under review as the situation develops.
- **DAERA Epidemiological Support to PHA**
 - DAERA wish to provide assistance to our health sector colleagues, where possible, to mobilise our collective resources to best effect in the response to COVID 19. DAERA is

therefore, in principle, happy to cooperate with, and provide assistance to the PHA to support epidemiological studies related to the COVID 19 Pandemic in Northern Ireland.

DAERA support will take the form of specialist epidemiological and supporting resources to work with our PHA partners to conceptualise, operationalise and communicate a specific pre-agreed area of study. DAERA resource will require close working with PHA experts in order to agree methodologies and remove any logistical barriers in order to complete and communicate the findings in due course. The Veterinary team will report via PHA & DAERA governance and reporting structures. The proposal is being considered by the CMO on April 10th 2020.

- **Trade Export Certification** - With the assistance and flexibility of staff, certification for third country exports, live animal and raw milk exports to the EU and import licensing continues as normal. Work continues with DEFRA and FSA colleagues to determine the implication for EU and third country exports, in relation to potential derogations from official controls, and to ensure NI interests are considered.
- **Import Controls** - Essential official imports controls at NI ports continue to be delivered to ensure that disease risks from imported goods, animals and plant material are minimized. The significant reduction in domestic and international flights has permitted an increased focus on the risk of disease from parcels imported from overseas.
- **Animal Movements / Welfare** Ongoing engagement with key stakeholders from markets, UFU and meat processors to maintain the flow of live animal movement in the absence of normally functioning markets, and develop protocols for re-opening selected markets in controlled and legally compliant manner.
- **Update on Essential Legislation** – Work on essential legislation is continuing at present, however, at a slower pace given the diversion of resource to COVID related work. This diversion, along with potential for additional COVID related absences, means that there is a risk that the legislation **may** not be completed within the required timescales and/or to standard.
- **Update on Essential Finance or Budget information**
- **Queries received from companion animal orientated businesses on designation as an ‘essential business’** – The Department has received two queries, seeking clarification if a dog grooming operation can be designated as an essential business, and therefore, have latitude to be excluded from restrictions arising from the Health Protection (Coronavirus, Restrictions) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2020. It is not within the Department’s gift to provide specific guidance to individual businesses. The Department has signposted businesses to the information provided by the Northern Ireland Executive on NI Direct and nibusiness.info

Questions from Members to DAERA on the COVID-19 Update provided on 8 April 2020

Briefing Subject/Area	Question	DAERA Response
TB Testing VSAHG	How can a farmer who is currently closed because of TB in their herd get the test to be allowed to be reopened if their vet is unwilling to do the test? What help and assistance is being offered to farmers who cannot get their herds tested?	<p>The Minister has advised that, due to the COVID risks to farm families, TB testing should not currently take place unless both the vet and the farmer are certain that social distancing can be maintained throughout the test in line with Public Health Agency guidelines. However to minimise the impact, the Minister decided on 9 April to extend the time at which a herd is placed under restrictions for an overdue herd test. With immediate effect, farmers will not automatically have their herd restricted until 35 days after their TB test becomes overdue. This will help facilitate those herds that are not currently under a TB restriction to continue to trade as normally as possible during these difficult times</p> <p>Furthermore all herds closed (reason overdue) from a test due date of 16 March are being retrospectively opened. Additionally cattle from herds that are restricted for overdue testing may be sent for slaughter.</p>
	If the farmers designated Vet is unwilling to visit to carry out the TB test, can an alternative Vet be used?	When a vet is not satisfied that a TB test can be undertaken safely in line with Public Health Agency guidelines, the Department is postponing the test until it is safe to do so. As such the Department is not re-allocating tests that are currently due, to an alternative vet.
Budget CSCPG	The bid of £1million for Rural Affairs is, in the opinion of the Committee, too low. The Committee would like to see this budget increased and have concerns that as the current health crisis continues and ramps up,	DAERA Rural Affairs staff are working closely with community and voluntary sector partners and have enabled them to focus all resources on Covid 19. This work is funded through the TRPSI programme for which the Minister has allocated £2.5m from the 2020/21 budget. As business as usual activity has been postponed

	<p>rural communities and geographically isolated rural households will need further and much more assistance. The Committee would like to see closer working between DfC and DAERA on this matter. The Committee made reference to problems in rural areas with the distribution on food parcels – some of which maybe teething problems but requested information on how well the food parcel scheme is working in rural areas.</p>	<p>this funding will be focused on Covid 19. Officials met with the Rural Support Networks, who represent 1,500 rural C&V organisations, on Thursday 9 April and they confirmed that the necessary support has been made available by DAERA. Officials will continue to meet weekly to review this position.</p> <p>DAERA are working closely with DfC. Both departments are collaborating to support the CFNI Coronavirus fund and Rural Affairs are represented on the DfC led Voluntary and Community Emergencies Response Programme Operational Group. DfC are providing an additional £6m towards the Community Support Programme and DAERA along with Rural Support Networks are engaged to ensure that funding goes to Rural Communities in need. DAERA are aware of the teething difficulties with the food parcels and have communicated this to the DfC led Emergency Leadership Group and it is envisaged that a more streamlined process will soon be in place.</p>
<p>Waste Management EMFG</p>	<p>The Committee noted that people are leaving their waste outside recycling centres during pandemic, as these centres are closed. Could opening on restricted hours or a rota basis be looked into to prevent this? There is also a big increase in fly tipping, some of which may be contributed to the closure of recycle centres. What is DAERA doing to tackle the increase in fly tipping.</p>	<p>At present there has been no notable increase in reports of fly-tipping to the NIEA (note: small scale fly-tipping and waste disposal incidents are generally addressed by local councils and as such may not be notified to the Agency).</p> <p>However a majority of local councils are reporting an increase in fly-tipping, with wastes being tipped in front of recycling centres, bring banks and in some remote locations. The increase varies greatly across councils with some reporting a slight increase and others more significant. Three councils have reported little or no change.</p> <p>Despite the increase, local councils are reporting that contingency measures in are place and currently addressing the issue. The situation is under continual review.</p>

		<p>The Department has in place a dedicated contractor, who upon direction, will clean up fly-tipped wastes on behalf of Department. The Department will primarily utilise this contractor to deal with clean-up of larger scale higher risk waste disposal incidents. Where appropriate the NIEA will assist with clean-up of lower risk incidents normally the responsibility of local councils.</p> <p>Fly tipping is included in comms activity thereby raising public awareness of the issue and highlighting the additional pressure this activity is placing on already stretched resources.</p> <p>The NIDirect weblink providing further information on waste disposal and reporting of illegal activity has been updated: https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/fly-tipping</p>
Waste Management	Trips to the recycling centre is seen as non-essential during lockdown, therefore it needs to be relayed to the public that clearing out waste / rubbish from households is not essential during this time. What are Councils doing to get this message across to households? Are there any plans for public service campaigns on this matter?	<p>Key messages were developed and disseminated to encourage the public not to create excess waste at this time and asking for patience while the HRC's are closed.</p> <p>This was shared by DAERA on Facebook, Twitter and the website. The information was also picked up by several councils and shared on their accounts, and their websites updated with this information. This was covered by BBC and on Radio Ulster and the key messages will continue throughout the pandemic and whilst the HRC's remain closed.</p>
Waste Management	Are there any plans for public service campaigns on this matter?	DAERA is providing funding to deliver further communications with the Councils. A flyer is under development for door to door mail drop. This will focus on our key messages; keep recycling, bin hygiene, fly-tipping, thank you to our waste workers and what to do with contaminated waste.

Waste Management	The Committee also expressed concerns regarding council waste collection staff handling potentially contaminated waste and asked what measures are being put into place to prevent this.	Guidance has been issued by the Waste Industry Safety and Health forum as well as more general advice on social distancing. Working with local councils and industry and after liaising with the PHA a dedicated page has been published on the NI Direct website around bin hygiene. This gives guidance on dealing with waste in households self-isolating due to Covid-19. The link has since been shared by DAERA, MYNI and many of the local councils and waste management companies. Many councils have updated their websites to reflect this advice. The Minister made a statement to respect and protect our key waste workers and also a video showing the public exactly how to follow the guidance that was issued. This was disseminated through mainstream and social media.
Waste Management	The Committee further noted that there was some capacity in the private sector waste collectors given that many services and commercial / retail premises are not operating and don't need waste collected. What if any discussions are happening with the private sector waste companies regard collection of waste and storage of waste that could be disposed of properly at a later point in time once the crisis is over, rather than going to land fill now.	The Department is in regular, ongoing discussion with both local councils and the waste industry on these issues.
Waste Management EMFG	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - How have the dept communicated this to councils - Councils want landfill tax removed, how will this fit with current targets and future remedial work? - Can recycle waste be stored elsewhere (Giants Park for example)? 	DAERA have been engaging and liaising with councils, including Arc21 and council associations on communications. This is through the Waste Working and Strategic Partnership groups and directly with communications teams at council level. This enables key messages to be shared uniformly while reaching as large an audience as possible.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - How involved are ARC 21 - What discussion has taken place on the possible incineration of waste? 	<p>At the moment there are shortages of recyclates in the system due to reduced commercial activity. The aim is to maintain flows.</p> <p>The Department's aim is to maintain as full a range of waste services as possible, including recycling. Directing waste to landfill should be the last resort. In general, there have not been discussions on incineration.</p>
<p>CAFRE FFG</p>	<p>It was noted that CAFRE colleges are closed and that there is a possibility for students to voluntarily helping farmers who are ill. The Committee wondered if students would be paid for this and if so, by whom?</p>	<p>Although face-to-face delivery of all programmes at College of Agriculture, Food and Rural Enterprise (CAFRE) has ceased, education courses continue to be delivered remotely, with lecturing staff actively engaging with students to ensure delivery of learning materials and completion of assignments and other coursework towards their qualifications. Students will continue on their education programmes up to the end of the academic year in late May 2020.</p> <p>DAERA officials from CAFRE have been in discussion with representatives of the Ulster Farmers' Union (UFU) and Farm Relief Services in relation to those students who may be available to help on other farms.</p> <p>Information on how to register with farm relief agencies has been circulated to students via CAFRE's virtual learning environment advising them to contact the recruitment agencies to offer their services should farmers require additional help.</p> <p>Working through a recruitment agency will ensure that students who put themselves forward to help at this time will receive the same payment and be under the same terms and conditions as other farm workers. The farm relief agency will pay the student for the hours worked and will invoice the farmer accordingly in the normal way.</p>

Briefing Subject/Area	Question	DAERA Response
<p>Future support schemes</p> <p>FFG</p>	<p>Any future support schemes for farmers.</p>	<p>DAERA are exploring a range of potential support measures along with colleagues in DEFRA and the other Devolved Administrations. These include the suitability of existing Covid Crisis measures; the possibility for European Union support using the Common Market Organisation (CMO) schemes such and public intervention; and sector specific national schemes. The latter will be potentially liable to state aids rules and will require funding to be secured from HM Treasury. A combined approach to HMT from across the UK is recommended.</p> <p>DAERA are working closely with the agri-food industry to establish the sectors most at risk and the potential scale of the impact. This will inform the type of schemes likely to have most success. Though any such schemes will be dependent on UKG funding.</p>
<p>Marts</p>	<p>The opening of Marts and what DAERA are doing with the NI Livestock Auctioneers about opening Marts.</p>	<p>DAERA officials have been in ongoing discussions with key stakeholders to finalise a set of robust operational protocols. These protocols would permit the gradual and safe reintroduction of sales on a limited basis for particular categories of livestock.</p> <p>It is the responsibility of all within the industry to self-regulate and implement these robust operational protocols to ensure business can be conducted in a manner that is safe for staff, for farmers and for buyers.</p> <p>In the interim, individual marts are currently exploring alternative ways in which livestock trade can be undertaken safely, such as video sales or the facilitation of arrangements between individual sellers and buyers. Some of them are expected to be operating using these alternatives as early as week commencing 13th April.</p>

Marts	Is DAERA working with NI Health and Safety Executive regarding opening of Marts and support schemes for farmers?	DAERA officials have been in ongoing discussions with key stakeholders to finalise a set of robust operational protocols. These protocols would permit the gradual and safe reintroduction of sales on a limited basis for particular categories of livestock. NI Health and Safety Executive have been involved in these discussions.
Milk	Is DAERA aware of any potential for processors not to be able to move dairy products including milk / dried milk and butter due to collapsing markets, and if so, could any surplus product in processing plants can be provided to food banks?	While prices for dairy products have fallen on global markets and the farm gate price is likely to fall in coming weeks, there is no evidence to date that processors have been unable to move products. The potential to utilise such products in food banks could be investigated further should those circumstances develop.
Avian Flu VSAHG	For Avian Flu - What financial support is available?	<p>In the case of avian influenza the Department is required to take disease control actions which may include culling only where H5 or H7 strains are detected and/or in all cases where the pathogenicity is confirmed as high.</p> <p>Compensation for culling is therefore only payable in cases of the above notifiable strains of avian influenza.</p> <p>As all of these recent cases were of a non-notifiable strain, Low Pathogenic Avian Influenza H6N1, the Department has no legal powers to compel culling and as a result no compensation or financial support is payable. When a non-notifiable strain of avian influenza is identified there is no requirement for further government intervention and restrictions are removed once investigations are complete.</p> <p>However practical support and biosecurity advice from Departmental officials was provided to assist flock owners who took the decision voluntarily to progress the depopulation and dispose of affected poultry.</p>

Avian Flu	<p>Can the department outline what it has learned about this disease from its engagement with the sector? What additional advice and recommendation are being communicated to the sector that could minimise the risk of spread to other premises?</p>	<p>The interim findings of the epidemiological investigations that are ongoing have indicated that biosecurity failings are the main contributory factor. The industry and private veterinary practitioners have worked closely with departmental officials to review biosecurity measures both at individual farm level and industry wide.</p> <p>Enhanced measures that have been agreed and implemented with the full involvement and cooperation of the sector will further protect the poultry industry.</p> <p>Veterinary officials will continue to assist the industry in providing expert advice to take the necessary steps to mitigate the impact. Officials are meeting with industry representatives frequently to discuss ongoing issues such as litter removal and protocols for cleansing and disinfection of premises.</p> <p>Industry are being proactive in seeking advice on risk mitigation measures and agreeing best practice. Veterinary officials have visited affected premises to assess site biosecurity and develop enhanced protocols for movements of people, products and equipment on and off holdings.</p> <p>The Department continues to issue proactive messages to industry and all flock keepers regarding vigilance, registering flocks, early reporting, the importance of maintaining biosecurity and subscribing to the Department's bird text alert service. These steps will contribute to minimising spread of the disease and the overall objective to protect the health status of the NI flock and, as such, underpin trade and the wider economy.</p>
Financial Support to	The Committee has requested	Of the 255 registered NI fishing vessels on our list, a minimum of 186

<p>the Fishing Industry</p>	<p>further detail of the number of vessels that are to be supported under the proposed scheme, and further detail on what vessels are excluded and why.</p>	<p>vessels will qualify for support.</p> <p>Vessels that will be excluded under the proposed scheme:</p> <p>Vessels that grossed less than £10,000 landings value in 2019.</p> <p>Below this threshold we consider that these vessels are not dependent on fishing as their main source of income. Thirty vessels fail to meet the £10k minimum threshold for landings. Thirty six vessels show no record of landings during 2019. The Department's scheme is more generous than Scotland where the threshold was set at £20,000 to equate to minimum wage level.</p> <p>Vessels that do not fish during the months of March-May.</p> <p>The Scheme is intended to assist with the fixed costs of vessels that have suffered hardship during the period of the COVID-19 outbreak to date and the month of May. If the vessels do not normally fish during this period they would not have suffered any hardship in the period in question. If the current conditions persist beyond the end of May the Department will consider what further support is required.</p> <p>Vessels over 28 metres in overall length.</p> <p>In Northern Ireland this excludes the three largest in the NI fleet which are highly profitable pelagic (herring and mackerel) vessels. These vessels would be expected to have sufficient resources to be able to cope without support. In addition their fisheries are seasonal. Their early season fishery finished prior to the current crisis the later fishery is in the second half of the year. In addition their markets are thought to be less vulnerable.</p>
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Fishing Industry	The Committee has requested further information on the migrant work force associated with the fishing industry and how they are being looked after.	The plight of these workers across the UK has been brought to the attention of the Minister for Future Borders and Immigration and the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions.
Fishing Industry	The Committee has requested further detail on the Non-EEA crew mentioned in the briefing i.e what numbers are we talking about, what are the issues that need to be considered.	Some non-EEA workers (mainly Filipinos) are paid via PAYE and can be furloughed. However, the NI industry has estimated that there are 81 non-EEA workers who are employed on self-employed contracts who cannot access the Job Retention Scheme or avail of assistance for the self-employed. The plight of these workers across the UK has been brought to the attention of the Minister for Future Borders and Immigration and the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions.
Fishing Industry	Will the crew go to sea during Covid-19 pandemic, can this be looked into and crew provided with appropriate support?	This is not a tie-up scheme. If appropriate social distancing practices can be implemented and there is a viable market for their catch, as key workers in the food supply chain, they may consider returning to sea.
Fishing Industry	The Committee request immediate updates regarding the consideration given by the Department of Finance to this scheme.	In a written statement to the NI Assembly on 9 April 2020 the Finance Minister, Conor Murphy confirmed that the Executive had agreed to the funding of £1.5 million to DAERA for support for the fishing industry – see link below. https://www.finance-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/dfp/COVID-19%20Response%20Written%20Assembly%20Statement%20v3%20%28003%29.pdf Minister Murphy has since written to Minister Poots (10 April) to advise that he can now proceed with the scheme as part of the Department's response on the Covid-19 pressures.

		DAERA officials are taking forward formal approval of the Scheme legislation with colleagues in the Department of Finance.
Fishing Industry	Who else apart from large vessels have been excluded from financial support?	<p>Those vessels defined as inactive (i.e. have no track record of commercial fishing during 2019) have been excluded.</p> <p>Vessels that generate less than £10k annual landings are also excluded on the basis that this level of activity indicates that the vessel is a part-time operation and not dependent of fishing for its livelihood. In Scotland this threshold has been set at £20k.</p>
Fishing Industry	What is the impact on those who are not eligible for assistance under the proposed statutory rule? Can Data and detail be provided?	<p>The impact is considered minimal for those excluded. There are 36 non-active vessels plus 30 “seasonal” vessels where the levels of landings indicate non-dependence on fisheries, and limited fixed costs throughout a year and in particular during the March–May period.</p> <p>The 3 pelagic vessels’ fishing season is August-January each year and herring and mackerel fisheries are very lucrative and, consistent with previous years, make sufficient income and profit to cover the 6 month period in which they are normally dormant.</p> <p>There is therefore no additional hardship caused, at present, to these vessels as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.</p>
Fishing Industry	The regulatory impact assessment indicates a negative impact on some vessels that will not be eligible for support – How would the department describe that impact – minor or major? Is there an impact on people and their livelihood? Why	For the reasons listed previously, the impact on those not eligible for support for the period March-May is considered negligible. Given the negligible impact the Department has screened the support scheme out of a full EQIA.

	has the department not conducted a full Equality Impact assessment?	
Fishing Industry	What are the issues with non-EEA crew? Have these issues been identified in the equality screening document?	<p>The NI fishing industry has estimated that there are 81 non-EEA workers who are employed on self-employed contracts and who cannot access the Job Retention Scheme or avail of assistance for the self-employed. The issues with non-EEA crew are around access to medical care, isolation if the crew have to stay on board, relaxation of temporary visa conditions if visas run out and the crew members cannot travel home.</p> <p>All of these issues have been drawn to the attention of the Department of Communities locally. In addition, the plight of these workers across the UK has been brought to the attention of the Minister for Future Borders and Immigration and the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions.</p> <p>The purpose of the Department's proposed scheme is to provide support to assist with fishing vessels' fixed costs during the COVID-19 pandemic, not their crew costs. The costs of all crew (including non-EEA nationals) were therefore not considered as part of the screening process.</p>
Fishing Industry	What are the reasons for the department not believing that proposed scheme is not suitable for any measures under European Maritime and Fisheries Fund? Is the south making an application?	<p>When the scheme was being formulated and funding secured, there were no measures available under EMFF to accommodate such support. At that time we did consider support through the EMFF Article 33 (Temporary Cessation Measure) but such assistance, due to the EMFF Regulation, was only available for periods of temporary cessation relating to the need to sustain stocks of fish.</p> <p>It was only on the 3 April 2020 that the Commission officially relaxed its rules to allow Article 33 to be used for periods of temporary cessation</p>

		<p>necessitated by the COVID-19 pandemic. At that stage, our scheme under de-minimis state aid rules was well advanced. It should be noted that the Commission has only relaxed their rules around using existing EMFF allocated funds. There is no new money available. We have some EMFF funding remaining that could now be reallocated to address COVID-19 impacts. We will be considering the use of EMFF in the first instance to support aquaculture businesses as there is no alternative legislative basis in fisheries legislation to provide financial assistance to this sector. Should the current difficulties persist in the sea fish catching sector after May we will consider what further support is needed for this sector and the possibility of using EMFF funding at that stage.</p>
<p>Single Use Carrier Bags Charge (Coronavirus Amendment) (NI)</p>	<p>The Committee have requested information on whether there are any financial impacts regarding the loss of funding arising from the exempt of from the 5 pence levy on single use carrier bags as a result of this amendment.</p>	<p>Prior to the outbreak of COVID-19 there were only three of the large Supermarket chains offering a home delivery grocery service (Asda, Sainsbury's and Tesco) across Northern Ireland. Over the course of 2019 early 2020 individual retailer policy of all three of these stores saw the removal of the provision of all bags for the home delivery service with goods simply being delivered un-bagged in crates.</p> <p>As such, and given that the charge for bags within the home delivery service had been phased out it would appear that the temporary exemption for home delivery service would have no financial or revenue issues for the Department. Financial and bag usage figures are notified to the Department on a quarterly basis with returns for the period January to March 2020 currently being processed and returns for the period April to June 2020 processed during the month of July 2020.</p> <p>It should however be noted that as a result of COVID-19 and the associated issues, many of the mid-sized supermarket chains, are now providing a home delivery grocery service for local customers who may have previously shopped in store. Continuous and ongoing liaison with</p>

		the wider NI retail sector informs that many customers are bringing their own bags when coming to shop however, current footfall is significantly down. While at this time it is hard to quantify exactly what impact this extension of local home delivery provision will have on the proceeds of the levy undoubtedly there will be some which will become apparent as the returns are collated.
Inspections	What inspections are still taking place?	We are working closely with a range of industries (food processors, waste and fisheries) as they seek to operate within the climate created by these new Regulations.
Waste	What measures can be implemented to reduce waste packaging?	We have worked to identify designated key workers needing to travel for work and are providing them with documentation to facilitate their movement.
DAERA key workers	Who are key workers and why is documentation needed?	<p>Designated Key workers are staff who support essential services and need be able to travel to their place of work. They include, for example, meat inspectors, environmental inspectors, veterinary officers, CAFRE farm staff, and DAERA Direct staff supporting animal disease management and export certification activities.</p> <p>Staff in these situations could find themselves having to explain the necessity of their journey. This documentation, when accompanied with photographic proof of identity, provides confirmation that the key worker is required to attend their place of work should they be asked to provide evidence of this.</p>
TB	Will dept cover any expense to farmers who lose animals to TB?	The Department currently pays full compensation to farmers for reactor cattle at bovine TB tests.
Animal By-Product Disposal and	VSAHG have developed a contingency plan for the disposal	The proper handling and disposal of Animal By-Products (ABPs) is critical to the continued functioning of agri-food supply chain and future

<p>Utilisation</p>	<p>and utilisation of Animal By-Products during the COVID-19 pandemic. The plan will focus primarily on the alternative disposal options available in the event of disruption to the NI rendering sector.</p> <p>Are there any details on these plans?</p>	<p>viability of the £4.5 billion NI Agri-Food industry. ABPs are defined as entire bodies or parts of animals, products of animal origin or other products obtained from animals which are not intended for human consumption. ABPs arise mainly during the slaughter of animals for human consumption, during the production of products of animal origin and in the course of the disposal of dead animals and during disease control measures.</p> <p>Regardless of their source, they pose a potential risk to public health, animal health and the environment. Past crises related to Foot-and-Mouth Disease (FMD), the spread of BSE and the occurrences of dioxins in feeding-stuffs have attracted public and media interest. Such crises demonstrate the public health, animal health and environmental consequences of the improper handling, use and disposal of certain animal by-products.</p> <p>EU Regulations state that the primary responsibility for the disposal and utilisation of ABPs lies with the operator, however requires Member States to ensure that there is an adequate system with appropriate contingency plans in place for the processing & disposal of ABPs, eg in event of a major disease outbreak or technical failure of a disposal facility.</p> <p>COVID -19 has been identified as a key risk to the continued disposal and utilisation of ABPs which as previously outlined is critical to the proper functioning of the NI agri-food supply chain. These risks may be manifested through reductions or cessation in the following activities:</p> <p>Available rendering capacity - due to absence of key operatives or the inability to source replacement parts as necessitated. Slaughter and processing capacity - particularly within the intensive poultry and pig sectors leading to overstocking and associated welfare</p>
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		<p>concerns. Collection of fallen stock ex farms. Market outlets and available storage capacity for products of processing and rendering industry, eg Tallow, Hides</p> <p>Veterinary Service Animal Health Group have developed the following hierarchy of disposal options to address both the perceived, and real COVID -19 related risks to the proper disposal and utilisation of ABPs.</p> <p>Rendering Incineration Landfill Burial on farm Burning</p> <p>Rendering Currently rendering is the default position for the disposal of ABPs. There are two category 1 renderers in NI with a combined potential throughput of 3,300 tonnes weekly and which are currently operating at approximately 75% capacity. Contingency plans to increase available rendering capacity include: Availing of DAERA/DAFM contingency plan protocol Agreed in 2015 for the optimal use of rendering capacity across the island of Ireland to provide for an emergency response</p> <p>Diversion of material to GB for rendering</p> <p>Incineration Presently there is limited incineration capacity within NI with only one high capacity plant dealing with fallen stock and abattoir material. There is the potential to increase capacity by 150% to approximately</p>
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		<p>170/tonnes per week subject to NIEA permission.</p> <p>Burial Animal By-Products Regulations permit burial in emergency situations, allowing the competent authority to authorise burial at a commercial or stand-alone landfill site which is approved to accept such substances and where the environment has been given consideration.</p> <p>There are currently 5 operating landfills in Northern Ireland that are permitted to take biodegradable waste of this nature. .</p> <p>Under the Waste Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2011, there is a legal duty on waste producers to take all such measures available to apply the waste hierarchy as set out in the EU Waste Directive 2008. In practice, this means the waste producer must utilise all available options for waste reduction, recycling, recovery or energy recovery before sending waste for landfill disposal. Therefore it would be inappropriate for government to recommend, facilitate or fund the landfill disposal of any wastes if other viable alternatives were available, including export to GB</p> <p>In a similar way to the landfill option above, Animal By-Products Regulations permit on farm burial in emergency situations. thus allowing the competent authority to authorise burial of fallen stock on farm, This would prevent a buildup of fallen stock and associated disease risks on farm in the event of either a rendering plant shutdown or reduced collection capacity.</p> <p>Burning Only to be considered as a last resort, the Animal By-Products Regulation permit the disposal of ABPs by burning on site in emergency situations. There would be considerable public perception</p>
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		<p>and environmental issues associated with this option including significant air quality impacts. NIEA are to give consideration to the development of a Regulatory Position Statement on this option.</p> <p>Other issues</p> <p>Tallow Disposal and Utilisation Associated with the COVID-19 outbreak has been the significant downturn in fuel consumption and demand. A potential knock on effect is a reduced demand for biodiesel which is the main outlet for tallow, one of the two products produced from the rendering of ABPs. Both renderers have limited storage capacity (1-2 weeks) but in excess of 20 weeks storage have been identified at two sites in NI. NIEA are currently engaged with site operators in relation to the issuing of licences and any required remedial actions.</p> <p>Hides & Skins The global market for hides and skins (Italy & China) has largely collapsed removing any outlet for this product. Processing (salting) and storage is continuing at present but should current environment continue or further deteriorate, serious consideration will need to be given to disposal via the above hierarchy. Disposal of hides via rendering will prove challenging.</p>
The Competition Act 1998 (Groceries) (Coronavirus)(Public Policy Exclusion) Order 2020	On 27 March, the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) made a Statutory Instrument (SI) The Competition Act 1998 (Groceries) (Coronavirus)(Public Policy	Answer not available at this time.

	<p>Exclusion) Order 2020 to temporarily relax competition law with respect to retail supermarkets and logistics services providers (e.g. haulage companies).</p> <p>Have any concerns been raised by stakeholders?</p>	
Retail	<p>Many retail staff are disclosing lack of social distancing and cleaning facilities</p>	<p>Position – DAERA raised this through the C3 structures and FSA also raised this directly with DoH.</p>
Agri-food sector workers	<p>Agri-food sector workers on Covid H&S measures and calls were made for suitable protocols.</p> <p>Who will monitor & check compliance?</p>	<p>Position – NIFDA and NIMEA have developed protocols with input from FSA, DAERA and other agencies. Businesses are each putting their own measures in place to protect and reassure staff in line with guidance on the GOV.UK website of 25/03.</p>
Movement of produce off farms	<p>Concern growing about the potential for a build-up of livestock on farms (particularly in the intensive sectors) and or products e.g. milk.</p> <p>Can surplus product be donated to foodbank/box schemes?</p>	<p>Position – DAERA are alive to all the issues and are in regular contact with industry representatives and with DEFRA and the other Devolved Administrations to explore options.</p>
Recycling	<p>The majority of Council's Household</p>	<p>The Strategic Investment Board (SIB) is providing a "Matchmaking</p>

	<p>Waste Recycling Centres (HWRCs) are closed.</p> <p>Is it poss to open (reduced hours) on a rotation system to stem the volume post covid?</p>	<p>Service” between councils and the private sector to link up capacity and resources pressures. Groups have been set up to ensure regular contacts between councils, DAERA and the waste industry.</p>
Recycling	<p>Could dept not provide this service? How much is SIB costing for this service? Who are these groups?</p>	<p>Response not available at this time.</p>
DAERA Direct Offices and Agency Staff	<p>Have staff been given the option to work from home where possible, bearing in mind that the closure of the livestock marts will substantially reduce the need for DAERA Direct face-to-face services? And ...</p> <p>Do the offices employ temp or agency staff & if so are they being treated in the same manner?</p>	<p>Yes</p>
EU Funding	<p>if there are any general market disturbances, DAERA would be looking for both National and EU funding.</p> <p>What EU funding can we apply for and has BREXIT impacted on funds available?</p>	<p>EU Emergency Support measures would be undertaken by the EU Commission using powers under the Common Market Organisation (CMO). These could be the operation of Public Intervention or the provision of aid for private storage of product to remove it from the market. No additional CMO measures have been announced as of 9 April 2020. The CMO continues to apply to the UK during the transition period and EU funding would be available until the end of the current EU Financial Year (15 October 2020). Direct Payments to Farmers will continue in 2020 scheme year with National funding fully replacing EU funding. Consequently BREXIT has not impacted on available EU</p>

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