

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

**MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS**

**THURSDAY 19 MARCH 2020  
ROOM 30, PARLIAMENT BUILDINGS**

Present: Mr Declan McAleer MLA (Chairperson)  
Mr Philip McGuigan MLA (Deputy Chairperson)  
Ms Clare Bailey MLA  
Mrs Rosemary Barton MLA  
Mr John Blair MLA  
Mr Pat Catney MLA  
Mr Harry Harvey MLA  
Mr William Irwin MLA

Apologies: Mr Maurice Bradley MLA

In attendance: Ms Stella McArdle, Committee Clerk  
Ms Elaine Farrell, Assistant Assembly Clerk  
Ms Marion Johnson, Clerical Supervisor

*The meeting commenced in open session at 10.04 a.m.*

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to move to agenda item 2.

**1. Chairpersons Business**

The Chairperson gave an update on the implications for committee meetings due to COVID-19.

*Noted:* The Committee noted that there would no longer be visitors permitted into the public gallery in committee rooms.

*Noted:* The Committee noted the letter from the Speaker and considered advice on social distancing and the associated arrangements required in committee meeting rooms.

The Chairperson advised the Committee that the meeting of the Inter-parliamentary Forum on Brexit on 19 March 2020 in the House of Lords has been cancelled.

*Agreed:* The Chairperson advised the Committee that an informal meeting with NI Farming Group has been arranged for 2 April 2020 at 1.00 p.m. In light of current circumstances in respect of COVID-19, the Committee agreed to defer this meeting until a later date.

*Mr Irwin joined the meeting at 10.10 a.m.*

*Mr Blair joined the meeting at 10.14 a.m.*

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to move into closed session.

*The meeting moved into closed session at 10.22 a.m.*

The Committee discussed the implications of COVID-19 on the Forward Work Programme and the Committee's ability to continue to meet on a weekly basis.

*The meeting moved into open session at 10.40 a.m.*

## **2. Apologies**

As above.

## **3. Draft Minutes**

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed the minutes of the meeting held on 12 March 2020.

## **4. Correspondence**

The Committee noted the following:

- i. Follow-up correspondence from the RSPB NI and Butterfly Conservation on the status of bird and butterfly populations.

The Committee considered the copied correspondence from the Department to the 11 council CEOs on the strategic direction of waste management direction in Northern Ireland.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to consider an oral evidence session at a future date from the Department and local councils on the Strategic Waste Management Direction.

## **5. Forward Work Programme**

The clerk briefed the Committee on the draft Forward Work Programme.

*Noted:* The Committee noted that the Balmoral Show on 14 May 2020 has been cancelled.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to cancel all planned visits and stakeholder events until the situation regarding COVID-19 becomes more clear.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed the draft Forward Work Programme.

## **6. AOB**

There was no other business.

## **7. Date, time and place of the next meeting**

The next meeting of the Committee for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs will take place on Thursday 26 March 2020 at 10.00 a.m. in Room 30.

## **8. Oral Briefing from DAERA on COVID-19**

The following departmental officials joined the meeting at 10.42 a.m.

Norman Fulton, Deputy Secretary, Food and Farming Group;  
Robert Huey, Grade 3, Veterinary Service and Animal Health Group;  
Brian Doherty, Grade 3, Central Services and Contingency Planning;  
Tracey Teague, Acting Chief Executive, NI Environment Agency.

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

The officials provided the Committee with a tabled copy of the relevant clause in the UK Parliament Coronavirus Bill 2019-2021.

*The meeting moved into closed session at 11.27 a.m.*

*Mr Blair left the meeting at 11.28 a.m.*

*Mr Blair rejoined the meeting at 11.39 a.m.*

*The meeting moved into open session at 11.41 a.m.*

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed that it was content with the clauses that relate to DAERA functions contained in the Coronavirus Bill 2019-21.

The Chairperson thanked the officials for their attendance.

*The meeting moved into closed session at 12.01 p.m.*

## **9. UK Government Agriculture Bill – Consideration of draft report**

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed that it is content with paragraph 1 of the background section of the report.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed that it is content with paragraph 2 of the background section of the report.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed that it is content with paragraph 3 of the background section of the report.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed that it is content with paragraph 4 of the background section of the report.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed that it is content with paragraph 5 of the background section of the report.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed that it is content with paragraph 6 of the background section of the report.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed that it is content with paragraph 7 of the background section of the report.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed that it is content with paragraph 8 of the background section of the report.

- Agreed:* The Committee agreed that it is content with paragraph 9 of the background section of the report.
- Agreed:* The Committee agreed that it is content with paragraph 1 of the Introduction section of the report.
- Agreed:* The Committee agreed that it is content with paragraph 2 of the Introduction section of the report.
- Agreed:* The Committee agreed that it is content with paragraph 3 of the Introduction section of the report.
- Agreed:* The Committee agreed that it is content with paragraph 4 of the Introduction section of the report.
- Agreed:* The Committee agreed that it is content with paragraph 5 of the Introduction section of the report.
- Agreed:* The Committee agreed that it is content with paragraph 6 of the main body of the report.
- Agreed:* The Committee agreed that it is content with paragraph 7 of the main body of the report.
- Agreed:* The Committee agreed that it is content with paragraph 8 of the main body of the report.
- Agreed:* The Committee agreed that it is content with paragraph 9 of the main body of the report.
- Agreed:* The Committee agreed that it is content with paragraph 10 of the main body of the report.
- Agreed:* The Committee agreed that it is content with paragraph 11 of the main body of the report.
- Agreed:* The Committee agreed that it is content with paragraph 12 of the main body of the report.
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- Agreed:* The Committee agreed that it is content with paragraph 14 of the main body of the report.

- Agreed:* The Committee agreed that it is content with paragraph 15 of the main body of the report.
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- Agreed:* The Committee agreed that it is content with paragraph 37 of the main body of the report.
- Agreed:* The Committee agreed an amendment to paragraph 38 of the main body of the report.
- Agreed:* The Committee agreed that it is content with paragraph 39 of the main body of the report.
- Agreed:* The Committee agreed to add an additional paragraph on Consent Provisions for Clause 32 after paragraph 39.
- Agreed:* The Committee agreed that it is content with paragraph 40 of the main body of the report.
- Agreed:* The Committee agreed that it is content with paragraph 41 of the main body of the report.
- Agreed:* The Committee agreed that it is content with paragraph 42 of the main body of the report.
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- Agreed:* The Committee agreed that it is content with paragraph 46 of the main body of the report.
- Agreed:* The Committee agreed that it is content with paragraph 47 of the main body of the report.
- Agreed:* The Committee agreed to add a new paragraph on Clause 40-42 WTO Agreement on Agriculture to be inserted after paragraph 47.
- Agreed:* The Committee agreed that it is content with paragraph 48 of the main body of the report.
- Agreed:* The Committee agreed that it is content with paragraph 49 of the main body of the report.
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*Agreed:* The Committee agreed that it is content with paragraph 73 of the main body of the report.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed that it is content with paragraph 74 of the main body of the report.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed an amendment to paragraph 75 of the main body of the report.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed that it is content with paragraph 76 of the main body of the report.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed that it is content with paragraph 77 of the main body of the report.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed that it is content with paragraph 78 of the main body of the report.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed that it is content with paragraph 79 of the main body of the report.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed that it is content with paragraph 80 of the main body of the report.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed that it is content with paragraph 81 of the main body of the report.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed a new paragraph to be added to its consideration of Schedule 6.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed that its Report on the Legislative Consent Memorandum on the UK Government Agriculture Bill should be laid in the Business Office and that it should be printed.

## **10. UK Government Fisheries Bill Consideration of Evidence and Key Issues**

The Committee considered the paper from the clerk on evidence gathered on the UK Government Fisheries Bill and the key issues arising out it.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed a number of amendments to the clerk's paper, which will be considered and signed off at the next meeting.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to forward a draft copy of the report to the Department on 25 March 2020 for checking of factual information purposes only.

12.38 p.m. *The meeting adjourned.*

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Declan McAleer, Chairperson, Committee for Agriculture and Rural Development

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Date