

COMMITTEE FOR AGRICULTURE, ENVIRONMENT AND RURAL AFFAIRS

MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS

**WEDNESDAY 6 MAY 2020
THE SENATE CHAMBER, 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 Maurice Bradley MLA (via teleconferencing)
Mr Pat Catney MLA
Mr Harry Harvey MLA
Mr William Irwin MLA

In attendance: Ms Stella McArdle, Committee Clerk
Ms Marion Johnson, Clerical Supervisor

The meeting commenced at 4.06 p.m. in open session

1. Apologies

None

2. Chairperson's Business

The Chairperson acknowledged the recent death of John Dallat and suggested that the Committee write to his wife to express its sympathy.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write a letter of condolence to the wife and family of John Dallat.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to move to agenda items 5 and 6.

3. Draft minutes

Agreed: The Committee agreed the minutes of the meeting held on 19 March 2020.

Agreed: The Committee agreed the informal note of the meeting held on 30 April 2020 and that it should be published on the Committee webpage.

4. Correspondence

The Committee noted the following:

- i. Correspondence from the Committee for the Economy on the cancellation of a proposed joint committee visit to Larne port.
- ii. Correspondence from the Chairperson of the All Party Group on Climate Change on the postponement of its meeting until 26 June 2020.
- iii. Correspondence from the British Veterinary Association regarding a request to government to include veterinary practices in support package plans for businesses affected by Covid-19.
- iv. Correspondence from DAERA on the publication of the Statistical Review of Northern Ireland Agriculture 2019.
- v. Correspondence from the Committee for the Economy on correspondence it agreed to forward from the NI Farm Group regarding emergency aid for farm businesses.
- vi. Correspondence from Environmental Gathering the potential proposal by the UK Government to establish less stringent standards of water quality than in the EU.
- vii. Correspondence from the British Veterinary Association on written evidence it submitted to the Northern Ireland Affairs Committee on Unfettered Access to Northern Ireland and customs arrangement after Brexit Inquiry.
- viii. Investment Strategy Northern Ireland Investing Activity Report for March and April 2020.

The Committee considered correspondence from DAERA on its intention to publish its response to the consultation on the Revised Numbering Format for Bovine Electronic Identification (EID). DAERA further advises

that it intends to make a further consultation with stakeholders in relation to the practical implications of EID.

Agreed: The Committee noted the correspondence and agreed to write to DAERA to ask that it is kept informed of the second consultation and the outcome.

The Committee considered correspondence from DAERA on the proposed consultation and amendment to the Horse Racing (NI) Order 1990.

Agreed: The Committee agreed write to DAERA to request an oral evidence session on the consultation and the impact on the Horse Racing Fund at a future date.

The Committee considered correspondence from Lidl, Co-Op and the Minister on the importation of Polish Beef during the COVID 19 pandemic.

Agreed: The Committee noted the correspondence and agreed to publish them on the Committee webpage.

5. Ministerial Briefing on Covid 19

Mr Edwin Poots, Minister for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs joined the meeting at 4.10 p.m.

He was accompanied by:

Norman Fulton, Deputy Secretary, Food and Farming Group
David Small, Chief Executive, NIEA

The Minister expressed his sympathy to the family of John Dallat following his recent death.

The Minister briefed the Committee on Covid 19 and this was followed by a question and answer session.

The oral evidence session was reported by Hansard.

The Chairperson thanked the Minister and his officials for their attendance.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department to request that, as discussed with the Minister, they write to the Public Health Agency regarding the location of the COVID 19 testing centres and the unsuitability of their location for many rural dwellers.

6. SL1 Direct Payments to Farmers (Crop Diversification Derogation) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2020

Norman Fulton, Deputy Secretary, Food and Farming Group, joined the meeting at 5.25 p.m. He briefed the Committee on the SL1 Direct Payments to Farmers (Crop Diversification Derogation) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2020. This was followed by a questions and answer session.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that the SL1 Direct Payments to Farmers (Crop Diversification Derogation) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2020 should move to the next legislative stage.

7. AOB

The Chairperson advised that Barbara Love is preparing a paper on the consideration of evidence and identification of key issues on the Environment Bill for Committee consideration week commencing 18 May 2020.

8. Date, time and place of the next meeting

The next meeting of the Committee for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs will be an informal meeting which will take place on Thursday 14 May 2020 at 10.00 a.m. via Microsoft Teams.

5.35 p.m. The meeting adjourned.

Declan McAleer, Chairperson, Committee for Agriculture and Rural Development

Date

