



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Committee for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs

Minutes of Proceedings

Thursday 18 March 2021

Meeting Location: Virtual Meeting by StarLeaf

Present by Video or Teleconference:

Declan McAleer MLA (Chairperson)
Philip McGuigan MLA (Deputy Chairperson)
Clare Bailey MLA
Rosemary Barton MLA
John Blair MLA
Maurice Bradley MLA
Harry Harvey MLA
William Irwin MLA
Patsy McGlone MLA

Apologies: None

In Attendance by Video or Teleconference:

Stella McArdle, Clerk
Barbara Love, Clerk
Elaine Farrell, Assistant Clerk
Marion Johnson, Clerical Supervisor
Kate Duffy, Clerical Officer

The meeting commenced at 9.21 a.m. in closed session



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Agreed: The Committee discussed its consideration of the agenda item on the Mubuooy Remediation Project and agreed to defer on the basis that the alleged operators of the Mubuooy Road Site are currently being prosecuted for offences under the Waste and Contaminated Land (NI) Order 1997; therefore, those criminal proceedings are active within the meaning of the Contempt of Court Act 1981

Noted: The Committee noted the practical arrangements for the joint meeting with the Committee for the Economy and the Committee for Infrastructure, including the procedure for the allocation of questions, which is taking place on 24 March 2021 at 10.00 a.m.

1. Matters arising

Agreed: The Committee discussed its review on Independent Panels Review of Decisions and agreed to sign off on a letter to the Minister, which incorporates its views, at the meeting on 25 March 2021.

The meeting moved into Open Session at 9.50 a.m.

2. Apologies

None.

3. Chairperson's Business

The Chairperson advised the Committee that he and the Deputy Chairperson met informally for a roundtable discussion with members of the BEIS Committee and other devolved administrations to discuss Net Zero and the COP26 Conference. A note of the meeting will be provided to Members in due course.

4. Draft Minutes

Agreed: The Committee agreed the minutes of the meeting held on 11 March 2021.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to consider the agenda item on Correspondence and Forward Work Programme next.



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5. Correspondence

The Committee noted the following correspondence:

- i. Correspondence from the Department on issues raised at the meeting on 18 February 2021;
- ii. Correspondence from the Department on issues raised at the meeting on 11 February 2021;
- iii. Correspondence from Me B Little, Mr J Carmichael and Mr D Ranking on the Independent Panel on the Review of Decisions;
- iv. Correspondence from the Department on the EU ETS;
- v. Correspondence from the Chairpersons' Liaison Group on the decision by the Executive to allow a condensed Committee Stage of the Damages (Return on Investment) Bill.
- vi. Correspondence from the EU Affairs Manager on the UKG Common Frameworks;
- vii. Correspondence from the EU Affairs Manager on the letters that the House of Lords EU Select Committee has written to Lord Frost in relation to the operation of the Protocol and the unilateral measures announced by the UKG on 3 March 2021;
- viii. Correspondence from the Department on issues raised at the meeting on 25 February 2021;
- ix. Correspondence from the Department on issues raised at the meeting on 28 January 2021;
- x. Correspondence from the Department on issues raised at the meeting on 4 March 2021;
- xi. Correspondence from the Minister for Infrastructure on the approval of a planning application for the modification of planning condition No. 7.

The Committee considered correspondence from Groomsport Harbour Association requesting support for the development of facilities to enable disabled access to the water and water based sports.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Association to thank them for their correspondence and to advise that the request is outside the remit of the Committee.



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The Committee considered correspondence from the Department on the consultation on the Extended Producer Responsibility for Packaging and a Deposit Return Scheme.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department to request that it provides the Committee with a summary of the consultation responses in due course.

The Committee considered correspondence from Hillmount Garden Centre, which has issued to all MLAs, on the issue of being afforded the same privileges as major multi-national supermarkets and home improvement stores, in order to sell products traditionally stocked by garden centres.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to seek permission from Hillmount Garden Centre to forward its letter to the Executive Committee.

The Committee considered correspondence from the Mourne, Gullion and Lecale Rural Development Partnership on the Future Rural Policy.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to publish the response on its webpage.

The Committee considered correspondence from the Department on the Mourne Mountain Middle Trustee Managed Estate and the election of trustees.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to forward the appendix contained in the correspondence to the two members of the public who originally had written to the Committee outlining their concerns.

The Committee considered correspondence from the Department on the UK Emissions Trading Scheme 2021 Review of Free Allowances: Call for Evidence.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to request that the Department advise of the outcome of the Call for Evidence in due course.

The Committee considered correspondence from a member of the public on the Islandmagee Gas Storage Construction Licence.



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Agreed: The Committee agreed to seek permission from the member of the public to forward the correspondence to the Department to ask for its opinion on the issues raised, including that of a local public inquiry and to consider bringing it to the attention of the Executive.

The Committee considered correspondence from Hospitality Ulster on its Hospitality Recovery Plan and a request to brief the Committee.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to Hospitality Ulster to advise that due to pressure of other business, it is unable to meet with them to discuss the report, however it notes that the Committee for the Economy has already arranged a meeting to discuss further.

The Committee considered correspondence from the Electricity Association of Ireland (EAI) offering to brief the Committee on its recent report, Out Zero e-Mission Future.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to EAI to request that if forwards a summary written briefing paper to the Committee for its consideration of climate change and to forward the report to the Committee for the Economy.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to contact EAI in respect of the Climate Change Bill once it has been introduced to the Assembly.

6. Forward Work Programme

Noted: The Committee noted that the evidence session with the PSNI on the issue of security at the ports has now been moved from 25 March to 15 April 2021.

Agreed: The Committee agreed the Forward Work Programme.

The meeting suspended at 9.59 a.m.
The meeting resumed at 10.06 a.m.



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7. Departmental Oral Evidence Session: Climate Change Bill Consultation and Policy Proposals

The following departmental officials joined the meeting at 10.06 a.m.:
Colin Breen, Director of Environmental Policy Division

Arlene McGowan, Grade 7, Climate Change Branch

Anthony Courtney, Grade 7, Climate Change Branch

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

The oral evidence session was reported by Hansard.

The Chairperson left the meeting at 11.11 a.m. The Deputy Chairperson assumed the Chair.

The Chairperson rejoined the meeting at 11.13 a.m. and resumed the Chair.

Mr Bradley left the meeting at 11.30 a.m.

The Chairperson thanked the officials for their attendance.

8. Departmental Oral Evidence Session: Waste Crime and Update on Mobuoy

The following departmental officials joined the meeting at 11.33 a.m.

Tim Irwin, Director of Resource Efficiency Division
Theresa Kearney, Senior Principal Scientific Officer
Jonathan Gray, Project Manager
Mark Cherry, Principle Scientific Officer

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

The oral evidence session was reported by Hansard.

The Chairperson thanked the officials for their attendance.

Mr McGlone left the meeting at 12.05 p.m.



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Mr McGlone rejoined the meeting at 12.11 p.m.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department to request a written briefing on the issue of the illegal dumping of animal carcasses and how this is dealt with, to include the situation were a landowner cannot be ascertained.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department to request a written update on the recommendations outlined in the Mills Report and the Action Plan that was drafted in response to that, as well as if any recommendations had been enhanced or developed further.

9. Departmental Written Briefing: Statutory Instrument – The Climate and Energy (Revocation) (EU Exit) Regulations 2021

The Committee noted the written briefing on Statutory Instrument – The Climate and Energy (Revocation) (EU Exit) Regulations 2021 which are UK-wide and drafted by BEIS and subject to negative resolution procedure.

Agreed: The Committee wishes it to be understood that due to a lack of information on Statutory Instrument - The Climate and Energy (Revocation) (EU Exit) Regulations 2021, and the limited time that it has had to consider it, it has been unable to fully explore and understand the potential impacts and implications to this jurisdiction. This difficulty has been further compounded by the fact that it is being asked to do so in the context of the legal uncertainties around the UK Internal Market Bill and the Withdrawal Agreement.

10. Departmental Written Briefing: Marine Plan for Northern Ireland.

The Committee noted the departmental written briefing on the Marine Plan for Northern Ireland and were advised to forward questions to the clerk for the Department by close of play.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department to request a written update on the progress of the Marine Plan which is currently with the Minister for his consideration.



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11. Departmental Written Briefing: EU Transition Update

The Committee noted the departmental written briefing on EU Transition Update and were advised to forward questions to the clerk for the Department by close of play.

12. AOB

None.

13. Date, Time and Place of the next meeting

The next meeting of the Committee for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs will take place on 25 March 2021 at 10.00 a.m.

The meeting was adjourned at 12.14 p.m.

Declan McAleer MLA

Chairperson, Committee for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs