



COMMITTEE FOR AGRICULTURE, ENVIRONMENT AND RURAL AFFAIRS

MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS

**THURSDAY 3 SEPTEMBER 2020
ROOM 30, PARLIAMENT BUILDINGS**

- Present:** Mr Declan McAleer MLA (Chairperson)
Mr Philip McGuigan MLA (Deputy Chairperson)
Ms Clare Bailey MLA (via StarLeaf)
Mrs Rosemary Barton MLA
Mr John Blair MLA (via StarLeaf)
Mr Maurice Bradley MLA (via StarLeaf)
Mr Harry Harvey MLA
Mr William Irwin MLA
Mr Patsy McGlone MLA (via StarLeaf)
- In attendance:** Ms Stella McArdle, Committee Clerk
Ms Barbara Love, Committee Clerk (via StarLeaf)
Ms Elaine Farrell, Assistant Clerk (via StarLeaf)
Mr Ed McCann, Clerical Officer (via StarLeaf)
Mr Sean O'Rawe, Clerical Officer

The meeting commenced at 10.01 a.m. in open session

1. Apologies

None

2. Draft Minutes

Agreed: The Committee agreed the minutes of the meetings held on 2 July, 30 July and 21 August 2020.

3. Oral Evidence Session: NI Business Brexit Working Group (NIBBWG)

The following representatives from the NIBBWG joined the meeting via StarLeaf at 10.03 a.m.

Mr Aodhan Connolly, Director, NI Retail Consortium
Mr Michael Bell, Executive Director, NI Food and Drink Association
Mr Wesley Aston, Chief Executive, Ulster Farmers' Union

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

The oral evidence session was reported by Hansard.

Clare Bailey joined the meeting at 10.04 a.m.

The Chairperson left the meeting at 11.04 a.m. The Deputy Chairperson assumed the Chair.

*Clare Bailey left the meeting at 11.06 a.m.
William Irwin left the meeting at 11.22 a.m.
William Irwin rejoined the meeting at 11.24 a.m.
John Blair left the meeting at 11. 38 a.m.*

The Deputy Chairperson thanked the representatives for their attendance.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to schedule an informal meeting with NIBBWG at a future date.

4. Departmental Written Briefing: ETS Common Framework: SI Greenhouse Gas Emissions Trading Order

The Committee noted and discussed the departmental written briefing on the ETS Common Framework – SI Greenhouse Gas Emissions Trading Order.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to the following:

- Commission RalSe research and oral briefing on the UK ETS;
- Publish all relevant documents on the SI Greenhouse Gas Emissions Trading Order on the Committee webpage;

- Write to all ETS participants and stakeholders, including the Brexit and Environment Group to seek comments in advance of the departmental oral evidence session on 17 September 2020; and
- Issue a Tweet to in respect of the actions agreed by the Committee.

5. SR 2020/105: The Direct Payments to Farmers (Controls and Checks) (Amendment) Scheme (Northern Ireland) 2020

The Committee considered SR 2020/105: The Direct Payments to Farmers (Controls and Checks) (Amendment) Scheme (Northern Ireland) 2020 which will provide a minor amendment to the rules for the application of EU Regulations 1306/2013 for the integrated administration and control system, rural development measures and cross compliance for claim year 2020 due to the situation caused by Covid-19. It will provide derogations from the requirements and reduces the minimum rate of on-the-spot checks, cross compliance, basic payment scheme and young farmer obligations.

Question put and agreed:

“That the Committee for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs, has considered SR 2020/105: The Direct Payments to Farmers (Controls and Checks) (Amendment) Scheme (Northern Ireland) 2020 and has no objection to the rule.”

6. Correspondence

The Committee noted the following:

- i. Correspondence from the Department on issues arising from the meeting on 24 June 2020.
- ii. Correspondence from the Department in respect of the consultation responses to the Management Measures for Widely Spread Invasive Alien Species.
- iii. Correspondence from the Department on issues arising from the meeting on 1 July 2020.
- iv. Correspondence from the Committee for the Executive Office on the 10 priority Common Frameworks.
- v. Correspondence from the Department which provides an update on the Competition Act 1998 (Dairy Produce) (Coronavirus) (Public Policy Exclusion) Order.
- vi. Correspondence from the All Party Group on UNSCR 1325 Women, Peace and Security on embedding gender equality in future policy and Covid-19 response.

- vii. Correspondence from the Department on issues arising from the meeting on 30 July 2020.

The Committee considered correspondence from the Ulster Farmers' Union on higher levels of BVD infection in Fermanagh alongside correspondence to the Minister on the issue and calling for legislation to be introduced to permit the sharing of information on BVD breakouts.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department to seek its position on the call for legislation and to indicate whether it feels that a review of the BVD legislation would be appropriate at this time. The Committee agreed to write to the UFU to advise of the action it has taken in response to their correspondence.

The Committee considered copied correspondence from the Ulster Farmers' Union to the Minister in relation to the lack of progress on the projects at AFBI Hillsborough, CAFRE Abbey Farm and Glenwherry Hill beef facilities.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to the Minister to request that he copies the Committee into the reply to the UFU on the issues raised in their letter and to advise the UFU of the action the Committee has taken.

The Committee considered copied correspondence from the Ulster Farmers' Union to the Minister on support for DIQUAT Emergency Use Derogation for Northern Ireland.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Minister to request that it is copied into the response to the UFU on the issues raised and to inform the UFU of the action the Committee has taken.

The Committee considered correspondence from the Department on the Plastic Reduction Action Plan: Eliminating Unnecessary Single Use plastics in Government Estate.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department to seek an update on the project in due course.

7. Forward Work Programme

The Committee considered and discussed the draft Forward Work Programme from September- December 2020.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to meet an hour earlier on its usual meeting day if considered necessary in order to progress business. Furthermore, the Committee agreed to meet on a Friday morning when necessary due to the unavailability of meeting rooms on any other day.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that there would be a number of Members who would continue to attend meetings virtually using the StarLeaf App in order to facilitate the requirements of social distancing in meeting rooms.

Agreed: The Committee agreed the Forward Work Programme September – December 2020.

8. AOB

The Committee discussed the payment aspect of beef sector element of the Agricultural Commodities Coronavirus Income Support Scheme 2020.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department to seek clarification on a potential change to the payment for the beef sector element.

9. 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 10 September 2020 at 10.00 a.m. in Room 30, Parliament Buildings.

The meeting moved into Closed Session at 11.56 a.m.

10. Departmental Written Briefing: Legislative Programme and EU Exit Preparation and Delivery

The Committee discussed correspondence from the Minister which outlines the Department's Legislative Programme. The Committee noted that the Department has committed to providing a weekly update during the Transition Period.

The Chairperson rejoined the meeting at 12.01 p.m.

The meeting was adjourned at 12.14 p.m.

Declan McAleer, Chairperson, Committee for Agriculture and Rural Development

Date