



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Committee for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs

Minutes of Proceedings

Thursday 1 July 2021

Meeting Location: The Senate Chamber/Virtual Meeting via StarLeaf

Present: Declan McAleer MLA (Chairperson)
Philip McGuigan MLA (Deputy Chairperson)
William Irwin MLA

Present by Video or Teleconference:
Clare Bailey MLA
Rosemary Barton MLA
John Blair MLA
Harry Harvey MLA
Patsy McGlone MLA

Apologies: Maurice Bradley MLA

Present: Nick Henry, Clerk
Kate Duffy, Clerical Officer

In Attendance by Video or Teleconference:
Elaine Farrell, Assistant Clerk
Neal Flanagan, Assistant Clerk
Marion Johnson, Clerical Supervisor

The meeting commenced at 10.05 a.m. in Open Session



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1. Apologies

As above.

2. Chairperson's Business

None.

3. Draft Minutes

Agreed: The Committee agreed the minutes of the meeting held on 23 June 2021.

4. Matters Arising

The Committee considered a departmental written briefing on the UKG Environment Bill and Supplementary Legislative Consent for two specific provisions that are considered technical in nature and within the scope of the original Legislative Consent Motion (LCM) passed by the Assembly in June 2020.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department to seek clarification on how transboundary issues will be managed in respect of the Environment Bill's LCM and forest risk commodities.

5. Oral Evidence Session Climate Change Bill: Ulster Farmers' Union (UFU)

The following representatives from the UFU joined the meeting by StarLeaf at 10.08 a.m.

Victor Chestnutt, UFU President



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David Brown, UFU Deputy President
Aileen Lawson, Senior Policy Officer

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

The oral evidence session was reported by Hansard.

Mr Blair left the meeting at 10.26 a.m.

Mr McGuigan declared an interest that is a co-sponsor of the Climate Change Bill.

Mr Blair re-joined the meeting at 10.42 a.m.

Mr Harvey joined the meeting at 11.04 a.m.

Mr Irwin left the meeting at 11.06 a.m.
Mr Irwin re-joined the meeting at 11.08 a.m.

Mr McAleer left the meeting at 11.10 a.m. The Deputy Chairperson assumed the Chair.

Mr Blair left the meeting at 11.16 a.m.

Mr McAleer re-joined the meeting at 11.40 a.m. and resumed the Chair.

The Chairperson thanked the representatives for their attendance.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to publish the UFU written briefing on the Climate Change Bill on the Committee's webpage.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to consider agenda item 11 next.

6. Oral Evidence Session - The Climate Change Bill: Professor Peter Thorne

Professor Peter Thorne joined the meeting by StarLeaf at 11.42 a.m.



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Professor Thorne briefed the Committee and this was followed by a question and answer session.

The oral evidence session was reported by Hansard.

Ms Bailey left the meeting at 11.46 a.m.
Ms Bailey re-joined the meeting at 11.56 a.m.

The Chairperson thanked Professor Thorne for his attendance.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to publish the written briefing from Professor Thorne on the Committee's webpage.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to consider agenda item 12 next.

7. Oral Evidence Session - The Climate Change Bill: Dr Andrew Jackson

Dr Andrew Jackson joined the meeting by StarLeaf at 11.58 a.m.

Dr Jackson briefed the Committee and this was followed by a question and answer session.

The oral evidence session was reported by Hansard.

Mr McGuigan left the meeting at 12.28 p.m.

The Chairperson thanked Dr Jackson for his attendance.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to publish the written briefing from Dr Jackson on the Committee's webpage.



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8. Departmental Written Briefing: SL1 The Agriculture (Student Fees) (Amendment) (No.2) Regulations Northern Ireland 2021

The Committee considered SL1 The Agriculture (Student Fees) (Amendment) (No.2) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2021 which will amend the Agriculture (Student Fees) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2007 that sets the level of fees payable for courses of Higher Education delivered at CAFRE. Members noted that the regulations required amendment to take account of comments made by the Examiner of Statutory Rules in respect of definitions for “EU Settlement Scheme”, “pre-settled status” and “settled status”.

Noted: The Committee expressed concern that the Regulations will have an impact on EU students without settled status who wish to study at CAFRE.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that it was content with the merits of the policy and that it should move to the next legislative stage.

9. Departmental Written Briefing: SL1 The Animal (Records, Identification and Movement) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2021

Agreed: The Committee noted that the Department has not provided any briefing papers for this agenda item and therefore agreed to defer its consideration of the SL1.

10. Departmental Written Briefing: SL1 The Equine (Identification) Regulations 2019

Agreed: The Committee noted that the Department has not provided any briefing papers for this agenda item and therefore agreed to defer its consideration of the SL1.



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11. Departmental Written Briefing: SR 2021/181 The Direct Payments to Farmers (Controls and Checks) (Amendment) (Coronavirus) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2021

The Committee considered SR 2021/181 The Direct Payments to Farmers (Controls and Checks) (Amendment) (Coronavirus) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2021, which was last considered at the meeting on 16 June 2021 when the Committee agreed that it was content with the merits of the policy and that it should move to the next legislative stage.

Question put and agreed:

“That the Committee for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs has considered SR 2021/181: The Direct Payments to Farmers (Controls and Checks) (Amendment) (Coronavirus) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2021 and has no objection to the Rule”.

12. Departmental Written Briefing: SR 2021/182: The Waste (Fees and Charges) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2021

Agreed: The Committee noted that the Department has not provided any briefing papers for this agenda item as the Examiner of Statutory Rules has identified a number of issues with the Regulations. The Committee agreed to defer consideration of the agenda item until the meeting on 8 July 2021.

13. Departmental Written Briefing: Statutory Instrument – The Market Surveillance (Northern Ireland) Regulations 2021

The Committee considered the Statutory Instrument and noted that it will take effect on 16 July 2021 with the purpose of establishing a market surveillance scheme to replace that which was in place within EU law and will take effect across three Departments; namely DAERA, Justice and Economy.



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Agreed: Committee Members agreed to forward questions on the Statutory Instrument by close of play.

14. Departmental Written Briefing: Statutory Instrument – The Common Organisation of the Markets in Agricultural Products (Transitional Arrangements) (Amendment) Regulations 2021 [AG/042]

Agreed: The Committee noted that the Department has not provided any briefing papers for this agenda item and therefore agreed to defer its consideration of the Statutory Instrument.

15. Departmental Written Briefing: NIEA Draft Business Plan 2021-22

Agreed: The Committee noted that the Department has not provided any briefing papers for this agenda item and therefore agreed to defer its consideration of the agenda item.

16. Departmental Written Briefing: Forest Service Draft Business Plan 2021-22

Agreed: The Committee noted the Forest Service Draft Business Plan 2021-22 and agreed to forward questions to the clerk by close of play.

17. Departmental Written Briefing: Marine Strategy Updated Programme of Measures

Agreed: The Committee noted that the Department has not provided any briefing papers for this agenda item and therefore agreed to defer its consideration of the agenda item.



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18. Departmental Written Briefing: EU Transition Update

Agreed: The Committee noted the EU Transition Update from the Department and agreed to forward questions to the clerk by close of play.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to publish the EU Transition Update on its webpage.

19. Correspondence

The Committee noted the following:

- i. Correspondence from the Department on an update report into Air Quality for the first half of 2020;
- ii. Correspondence from the Department providing an update on the progress of Tranche 3 of the Farm Business Improvement Scheme;
- iii. Correspondence from the Department on its proposals to launch a consultation on 22 June 2021 on changes to the process for appealing decisions made in relation to area-based payments;
- iv. Correspondence from the NI Audit Office outlining its activities and future work programme with respect to the Department;
- v. Correspondence from the Department regarding the Climate Change Progress Report;
- vi. Correspondence from the Committee for Finance seeking views on its Financial Reporting Bill;
- vii. Correspondence from the Committee for Justice on its Report on the Criminal Justice (Committal Reform) Bill.
- viii. Correspondence from the Department on the Strategic Investment Board's summary report of DAERA's projects that involve investing activities.

The Committee considered correspondence from the Department outlining its intention to engage in a joint consultation in late summer/early autumn on the establishment of a UK-wide policy on managing radioactive substances and nuclear decommissioning.



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Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department to seek confirmation on whether there will be any consultation engagement with the ROI and EU on the proposed policy.

The Committee considered correspondence from the Ulster Farmers' Union (UFU) on an Arable Strategy for Developing Sustainable Arable Production in Northern Ireland.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to schedule an oral briefing from the UFU as and when its Forward Work Programme allows in the next session.

The Committee considered correspondence from the Steering Group on the NI Sheep Scab Control on the potential to introduce scab control in any future plans for new models of agri-support.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department to seek clarification on whether any plans are being considered to introduce strategies for the eradication of scab in sheep herds.

The Committee considered correspondence from a member of the public in respect of concerns about the Farm Nutrient Management Scheme.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department to consider the issues highlighted in the correspondence.

20. Forward Work Programme

Agreed: The Committee agreed to advise the clerk of their availability to attend the joint virtual visit with the Committee for the Economy to the Dairy Council on 8 July 2021 at 1.30 p.m.

Agreed: The Committee agreed the Forward Work Programme.

21. AOB

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to Farmers for Action to seek a response to its raised within the RaISe research paper on the proposed Farm Welfare Bill.



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Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department to ask that consideration is given to the £29.7m unallocated capital from the June Monitoring Round can be used for investment in rural areas purposes.

22. 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 8 July 2021 at 10.00 a.m. and will be hybrid meeting streamed on the Assembly's website.

The meeting was adjourned at 12.48 p.m.

Declan McAleer, MLA
Chairperson, Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs Committee