



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Committee for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs

Minutes of Proceedings

Thursday 11 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
Jessica Jacques, EU Affairs Officer

The meeting commenced at 9.33 a.m. in open session

1. Apologies

None.

2. Chairperson's Business

The Chairperson advised the Committee that he will be meeting informally with the Permanent Secretary today to discuss the late arrival of briefing papers from the Department to the Committee.

3. Draft Minutes

Agreed: The Committee agreed the minutes of the meeting held on 4 March 2021.

4. Matters arising

None.



5. Departmental Oral Briefing: Ministerial Priorities 2021/22

Minister Poots and the following departmental officials joined the meeting at 9.37 a.m.

Dr Denis McMahon, Permanent Secretary
David Small, Deputy Secretary
Dr Robert Huey, Chief Veterinary Officer
Norman Fulton, Head of Food and Farming Branch
Brian Doherty, Head of Central Services and Contingency Planning

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

The oral evidence session was reported by Hansard.

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

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department to request a written update to include progress and a timeline on various strategies to include Green Growth, Ammonia and Peatlands Strategies.

The Chairperson left the meeting at 11.18 a.m. The Deputy Chairperson assumed the Chair.

6. Oral Evidence Session: TUS – withdrawal of Local Authority Staff from Ports

The following TUS representatives joined the meeting at 11.18 a.m.

Alan Law, Assistant Secretary, NIPSA
Alan Perry, General Officer, GMB



Keiran Ellison, General Officer, UNITE

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

The oral evidence session was reported by Hansard.

The Chairperson rejoined 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 briefing papers from TUS on the Committee's webpage.

7. Oral Evidence Session: Agricultural Consultants Association/NIAPA – Independent Panel on Review of Decisions

The following representatives joined the meeting at 12.10 p.m.

David Rankin, Chairman, Agricultural Consultants Association

Jim Carmichael, Development Officer, NIAPA

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

The Chairperson thanked the representatives for their attendance.



8. Written Briefing: Consideration of Responses: Independent Panel for Review of Decisions on Area Based Schemes

Agreed: The Committee agreed to defer consideration of this agenda item until the meeting on 18 March 2021.

9. Departmental Written Briefing: Statutory Instrument – The Air Quality (Legislative Functions) (Amendment) Regulations 2021

The following departmental officials joined the meeting at 1.00 p.m.

Caroline Barry, Acting Head of Chemical and Industrial Policy

Colin Nugent, Environmental Policy Advisor

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

Agreed: The Committee wishes it to be clearly understood that due to lack of information on Statutory Instrument -The Air Quality (Legislative Functions) (Amendment) Regulations 2021 (Defra/ENV/27) 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: Green Growth Update.

The Committee noted the departmental written briefing on Green Growth.



Agreed: The Committee agreed to forward questions on the Green Growth update to the clerk by close of play for forwarding to the Department.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department to request that it is kept informed of the progress in relation to the Green Growth Strategy Framework document which is scheduled to issue at the end of the month.

11. Correspondence

The Committee noted the following:

- i. Correspondence from the RSPB to the Minister and copied to the Committee on the establishment of a Green Recovery Fund in Northern Ireland.
- ii. Correspondence from the Competitions and Market Authority on the establishment of the Office for the Internal Market (OIM).
- iii. Correspondence from the Chairperson on his intention to bring a Private Members Bill on ANC payments.
- iv. Correspondence from the Committee for Finance on a response from the Minister for the Economy in relation to Covid-19 business support schemes supported by her Department.

The Committee considered correspondence from the Committee for the Economy on its work on the RHI scheme which advises that the public consultation has been launched to determine the future of the non-domestic Scheme.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Committee for the Economy to request that it forwards the analysis of the consultation responses in due course.

The Committee considered correspondence from the Causeway Coast and East Glens LAG on the Rural Affairs Policy and Framework Delivery.



Agreed: The Committee agreed to publish the LAG's response on the Committee webpage.

12. Forward Work Programme

Noted: The Committee noted the changes to the Forward Work Programme.

Agreed: The Committee agreed the Forward Work Programme.

13. AOB

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department to request a written briefing on the potential to develop an animal cruelty register, the need for an all-island register and the cross cutting aspects of such a register.

14. Date, Time and Place of the next meeting

The next meeting of the Committee for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs will take place on 18 March 2021 at 9.30 a.m.

The meeting was adjourned at 1:08 p.m.



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Declan McAleer MLA

Chairperson, Committee for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs