



**COMMITTEE FOR AGRICULTURE, ENVIRONMENT AND RURAL AFFAIRS**

**MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS**

**THURSDAY 26 NOVEMBER 2020  
ROOM 30, PARLIAMENT BUILDINGS**

- Present: Mr Declan McAleer MLA (Chairperson)  
Mr Philip McGuigan MLA (Deputy Chairperson) (via StarLeaf)  
Ms Clare Bailey MLA (via StarLeaf)  
Mrs Rosemary Barton MLA  
Mr John Blair MLA  
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  
Ms Elaine Farrell, Assistant Clerk (via StarLeaf)  
Ms Marion Johnson, Clerical Supervisor  
Ms Kate Duffy, Clerical Officer

*The Committee commenced at 9.51 a.m. in Open Session*

**1. Apologies**

None

**2. Chairperson's Business**

The Chairperson advised the Committee that the Fisheries Bill received Royal Assent on 23 November 2020 and is now known as the Fisheries Act 2020.

### **3. Minutes of the meeting held on 19 November 2020**

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

*Mr Irwin joined the meeting at 9.53 a.m.*

### **4. Matters arising**

The Chairperson advised the Committee that the Department has advised that the request for an oral briefing on Project Stratum falls under the remit of the Department for the Economy and as such, should be directed to the officials there.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to write to the Department for the Economy to request an oral briefing on Project Stratum.

### **5. Oral Evidence DAERA: The Rural Policy Framework**

The following departmental officials joined the meeting via StarLeaf at 9.55 a.m.

Fiona McCandless, Deputy Secretary  
Paul Donnelly, Director of Rural Affairs  
Gareth Evans, Leader & Rural Tourism Implementation Manager

The officials 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 10.55 a.m.*

*Mr Blair rejoined the meeting at 11.02 a.m.*

The Chairperson thanked the officials for their attendance.

### **6. Oral Evidence: Rural Community Network, Rural Action & NI Rural Women's Network**

The following representative joined the meeting via StarLeaf at 11.12 a.m.

Louise Coyle, Director, NI Rural Women's Network  
Aidan Campbell, Policy Officer, Rural Community Network  
Teresa Canavan, Chief Executive Officer, Rural Action

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

The oral evidence session was reported by Hansard.

*Mr Irwin left the meeting at 11.23 a.m.*

*Mr Irwin rejoined the meeting at 11.37 a.m.*

The Chairperson thanked the representatives for their attendance.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed the draft Press Release on the future Rural Affairs Policy.

**7. Oral Evidence DAERA: Common Framework for Fluorinated Greenhouse Gases and Ozone Depleting Substances.**

The following departmental official joined the meeting via StarLeaf at 11.59 a.m.

Colin Nugent, Environmental Policy Advisor/Health Officer

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

The oral evidence was reported by Hansard.

*Mr Blair left the meeting at 12.12 p.m.*

*Mr Blair rejoined the meeting at 12.17 p.m.*

The Chairperson thanked the official for his attendance.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to write to the Department on a number of issues related to the Common Framework for Fluorinated Greenhouse Gases and Ozone Depleting Substances.

**8. Departmental Written Briefing: SL1 The Sea Fish Industry (Coronavirus) (Fixed Costs) (No.2) Scheme (Northern Ireland) 2020**

The following departmental officials joined the meeting via StarLeaf at 12.17 p.m.:

Paddy Campbell, Head of Sea Fisheries, Policy & Grants

Patrick Smith, Sea Fisheries, Policy & Grants  
Ronnie McBride, Sea Fisheries, Policy & Grants

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

The Committee noted the SL1 The Sea Fish Industry (Coronavirus) (Fixed Costs) (No.2) Scheme (Northern Ireland) 2020 which will specifically address the financial needs of the small scale full-time fishermen from rural communities in the static gear fishing fleet whose key markets for their landings of key shellfish species have been impacted significantly by the Covid-19 pandemic by providing grant of up to £1,250 per month for up to four months towards 50% of their vessel's fixed costs.

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

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to write to the Department to request a written update for the meeting on 3 December 2020 on the Lough Neagh fishermen financial support issue.

**9. Departmental Written Briefing: SL1 The Seeds (Northern Ireland Variety Lists) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2020**

The following departmental official joined the meeting via StarLeaf at 12.24 p.m.

Tommy McNamara, Regulatory & Natural Resources Policy Division

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

The Committee noted the SL1 The Seeds (Northern Ireland Variety Lists) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2020 which will transpose Council Directive 2002/53/EC on the common catalogue of varieties of agricultural plant species and Council Directive 2002/55/EC on the marketing of vegetable seed (as it relates to listing of vegetable varieties).

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

**10. Written Briefing DAERA: Statutory Instrument DEFRA/AG/32: The Fertilisers and Ammonium Nitrate Material (Amendment) (EU Exit) (No.2) Regulations 2020 (Category 2)**

The following departmental official joined the meeting via StarLeaf at 12.26 p.m.

Tommy McNamara, Regulatory & Natural Resources Policy Division

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

The Committee considered Statutory Instrument DEFRA/AG/32: The Fertilisers and Ammonium Nitrate Material (Amendment) (EU Exit) (No.2) Regulations 2020 which the Department advises will make technical changes in order to fully implement the European Union Withdrawal Agreement and the Protocol. DAERA have indicated that the amendments will ensure that those legislative measures in Annex 2 to the Protocol will continue to fully apply in this jurisdiction at the end of the transition period

*Agreed:* The Committee wishes it to be clearly understood that due to lack of information on SI Defra/AG/32 The Fertilisers and Ammonium Nitrate Material (Amendment) (EU Exit) (No. 2) Regulations 2020 (Category 2) 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.

*Mr McGlone left the meeting at 12.30 p.m.*

#### **11. Written briefing DAERA: EU Exit Preparation and Delivery Update**

*Noted:* The Committee noted the departmental written briefing on EU Exit Preparation and Delivery Update which contained a table of information on priority Statutory Rules.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to forward any questions on the written briefing to the clerk by close of play for onward transmission to the Department for answer.

#### **12. Correspondence**

The Committee noted the following:

- i. Correspondence from the Committee for the Economy on the overlap of committee business on EU Exit matters on the Trader

Support Service, the readiness of the Goods Vehicle Movement System and the Goods Movement Reference.

- ii. Correspondence from the Department on issues raised at the meeting on 5 November 2020 on EU Exit Preparedness; the Review on fee for a Review of Decisions Panel Hearing for Area Bases Schemes; and the LMC letter seeking financial; support for suckler beef and sheep sectors.

The Committee considered correspondence from the Committee for Communities seeking the views of statutory committees on the Licensing and Registration of Clubs (Amendment) Bill.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to write to the Committee for Communities to ask it ensure that when taking evidence from stakeholders and witnesses, that it ensure the validity of the statement in the EFM in respect of rural needs.

The Committee considered copied correspondence from Ulster to Minister Poots about the financial crisis in the wool market and requesting urgent Covid-19 financial support.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to write to the Minister to urge him to meet with Ulster Wool and discuss their concerns and that he gives consideration to the development of a strategy to improve the sustainability of wool production and request that the Minister keeps the Committee informed of any developments.

The Committee considered the correspondence from the Department on the issue raised at the meeting on 5 November 2020 on the impact of business of Statutory Instrument Defra/CMO/17.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to write to the Department to request a further update on local business of the new transitional arrangements for products imported into GB including the (i) import of hops/ hop products (ii) imports of EU beef and veal (iii) 2-year period for accepting EU certificates on fruit and veg.

The Committee considered correspondence from the Department on issues raised at the meeting on 22 October 2020 in relation to the correspondence from the Finance Minister regarding concerns on aspects of the guarantee of future agricultural funding.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to request an urgent oral briefing from the Department on the issue of future agricultural funding.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to write to George Eustice MP in support of the three Ministers from the devolved administrations on the EU replacement funding issue.

### **13. Forward Work Programme**

*Noted:* The Committee noted that the next three meetings will have full agendas in order to consider the volume of SL1s and SRs which have yet to come to the Committee for consideration. It was noted that this may mean that meetings may overrun into the next day if all matters are not considered within the allocated meeting time.

*Noted:* The Committee noted that meetings on 3 and 10 December will commence at 9.30 a.m. and the meeting on 17 December will commence at 9.15 a.m.

*Noted:* The Committee noted that the first meeting following Christmas recess will be Thursday 14 January 2021.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed the Forward Work Programme.

### **14. AOB**

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to write to the Department to ask it to consider a derogation for ewe lambs coming back from Scotland after 1 January 2021 so that they are not scrapie monitored.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to write to the Department to seek clarification on the enforcement of Covid-19 regulations on angling and the number of anglers at any one time that they apply to. Furthermore, the Committee agreed to ask the Department if angling is considered an elite sport and would therefore be exempt from the regulations.

### **15. 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 3 December 2020 at 9.30 a.m. in Room 30, Parliament Buildings.

*The meeting adjourned at 12.40 p.m.*

*D McAleer*

Declan McAleer, Chairperson, Committee for Agriculture and Rural Development

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Date