



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Committee for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs

Minutes of Proceedings

Thursday 27 May 2021

Meeting Location: Room 30, Parliament Buildings

Present: Declan McAleer MLA (Chairperson)

Present by Video or Teleconference:

Philip McGuigan MLA (Deputy Chairperson)

Clare Bailey MLA

Rosemary Barton MLA

John Blair MLA

Maurice Bradley MLA

Harry Harvey MLA

William Irwin MLA

Apologies: Patsy McGlone MLA

In Attendance: Nick Henry, Clerk
Kate Duffy, Clerical Officer



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In Attendance by Video or Teleconference:

Elaine Farrell, Assistant Clerk

Neal Flanagan, Assistant Clerk

Marion Johnson, Clerical Supervisor

The meeting commenced at 10.02 a.m. in Open Session

1. Apologies

Noted above.

2. Chairpersons Business

The clerk briefed the Committee on the two stakeholder events in relation to the evidence gathering for the Climate Change Bill, which are scheduled to take place on 17 June 2021.

Agreed: The Committee agreed the draft invitation and stakeholder event plan with Members to advise the clerk of their availability for the evening stakeholder event by next week.

3. Draft Minutes

Agreed: The Committee agreed the minutes of the meeting held on 20 May 2021.



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4. Matters arising

None.

5. Oral Evidence Session: DAERA – Climate Change Bill

The following departmental officials joined the meeting at 10.10 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 question and answer session.

The oral evidence session was reported by Hansard.

The Chairperson thanked the officials for attending.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to publish the Department's briefing paper on the Committee webpage.

6. Departmental Written Briefing: Consultation on amendments to the Marine Licensing (Exempted Activities) Order (Northern Ireland) 2011

The Committee considered the departmental written briefing on the proposed consultation on amendments to the Marine Licensing (Exempted Activities) Order (Northern Ireland) 2011 which will launch on 28 May 2021 for a period of 9 weeks. The amendments will ensure that the marine licensing system remains proportionate to the risk to the environment, human health and other uses of the seas to ensure an operation that is efficient and coherent and consistent with marine licensing across Northern Ireland waters and the wider UK.



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Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department to request an analysis of the consultation responses in due course.

7. Departmental Written Briefing: EU Transition Update

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

8. Correspondence

The Committee noted the following:

- i. Correspondence from the Department on the Independent Strategic Review of NI Agri-Food;
- ii. Correspondence from the Committee for Infrastructure advising that it will defer its response on the call for evidence on the Climate Change Bill until it gathers information from its Inquiry on Decarbonisation of Road Transport in Northern Ireland;
- iii. Copied correspondence from Down Royal Racecourse to the Minister raising concerns regarding the Committee Motion to extend the Committee Stage of the Horse Racing (Amendment) Bill 2021;
- iv. Correspondence from the Department on the commencement of a public consultation on a Rural Policy Framework;
- v. Correspondence from the House of Lords European Affairs Sub-Committee on the Protocol on issue it has raised with Defra on the provision of technical and practical support for officials in relation to controls around the transit of animals and products of animal origin as well as the transit of certain plant products;
- vi. Correspondence from Planet Earth raising a wide range of environmental concerns;
- vii. Correspondence from the Department on the launch of its 8-week consultation on the Single Use Carrier Bags Charge Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2013.



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- viii. Correspondence from the Speaker to all secretariat staff and MLAs on Assembly Recess and Recall.

The Committee considered correspondence from a member of the public asking when the practise of slurry spreading will stop in this region.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to reply to the member of the public to advise them to forward the question to the Department for a response.

The Committee considered correspondence from the Committee for Finance seeking the views of the Committee in respect of the proposal for an Independent Fiscal Council for Northern Ireland.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to advise the clerk of any issues they wish to raise in order for a response to issue to the Committee for Finance.

9. Forward Work Programme

Noted: The Committee noted that the Minister has confirmed his attendance for the meeting on 3 June 2021 to provide oral evidence in respect of the Committee investigation into the withdrawal of DAERA and Local Authority Staff at the ports.

Noted: The Committee noted that the Woodlands Trust has confirmed its attendance at the meeting on 10 June 2021 in respect of providing oral evidence on the Climate Change Bill.

Noted: The Committee noted that an additional virtual meeting has been organised for 16 June 2021 at 2.00 p.m. to allow for additional oral evidence sessions on the Climate Change Bill.

Agreed: The Committee agreed the Forward Work Programme.

10. AOB

None.



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11. 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 June 2021 at 9.30 a.m. and will be a hybrid meeting.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to move into Closed Session.

The meeting moved into Closed Session at 11.32 a.m.

12. Committee investigation into the Withdrawal of DAERA and Local Authority Staff from the ports

The clerk briefed the Committee on the correspondence that has been received from the Chief Executive of Mid and East Antrim Borough Council, Mrs Anne Donaghy, in respect of a written request by the Committee to attend a further meeting to answer questions on remaining outstanding issues.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to Mrs Donaghy on the matter of outstanding questions in relation to the investigation into the withdrawal of DAERA and Local Authority staff from the ports, seeking a response by 10 June 2021 and to provide the opportunity to attend the Committee meeting on that date if she would wish to do so

Agreed: The Committee agreed to forward questions for inclusion in the correspondence to Mrs Donaghy to the Clerk by close of play on 28 May 2021, which will be circulated to the Committee prior to issue.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to publish a redacted version of received email correspondence from Alderman Mulvenna with the elements not directly related to the Committee's Inquiry removed as per legal advice. Alderman Mulvenna will be notified of this and Committee's intention to also send Mrs Donaghy a reacted copy of the email.

Noted: The Committee noted the correspondence which had been received by a Committee Member regarding the Farm Nutrient Management Scheme. Members



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noted that Legal Services will draft a reply on behalf of the Members concerned. It was noted that another Committee Member had received similar correspondence and had taken independent legal advice.

The meeting was adjourned at 11.51p.m.

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