



# Committee for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs

## Minutes of Proceedings

Thursday 29 April 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

Patsy McGlone MLA

**Apologies:** None

**In Attendance:**



Stella McArdle, Clerk

**In Attendance by Video or Teleconference:**

Elaine Farrell, Assistant Clerk

Marion Johnston, Clerical Supervisor

Kate Duffy, Clerical Officer

The meeting commenced at 9.10am in open session

**1. Apologies**

None.

**2. Chairperson's Business**

**Noted:** The Committee noted the note of the informal meeting with the NI Affairs Committee which the Chairperson attended on 15 April 2021.

**3. Draft Minutes**

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed the minutes of the meeting held on 22 April 2021.

**4. Matters Arising**

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to move into Closed Session



The meeting moved into Closed Session at 9.14 a.m.

The Committee discussed a number of procedural matters.

The meeting moved into Open Session at 9.35 a.m.

Mr Irwin joined the meeting at 9.35 a.m.

The Committee considered emailed correspondence to a Committee Member regarding the Committee Review into the withdrawal of DAERA and Local Authority staff from the ports.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to publish the emailed correspondence, with the email address and surname redacted, on the Committee's webpage.

**Agreed:** The Committee requested that the clerk emails the privilege and procedural guidance, referred to in the Closed Session, to all Committee Members.

## **5. Oral Evidence Session Clare Bailey MLA: The Climate Change Bill**

The following representatives joined the meeting by StarLeaf at 9.39 a.m.

Clare Bailey MLA

Dr Amanda Slevin, Chair of the Climate Coalition NI

Anurag Deb, Climate Change Coalition NI

Phil Carson, Climate Change Coalition NI

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

The oral evidence session was reported by Hansard.

Mr Bradley left the meeting at 10.35 a.m.

The Chairperson left the meeting at 10.42 a.m. The Deputy Chairperson assumed the Chair.

The Chairperson rejoined the meeting at 10.52 and resumed the chair.



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

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

Mrs Barton declared that one of her party colleagues is a co-sponsor of the Climate Change Bill.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to publish the Climate Change Bill written briefing on its webpage.

The Chairperson thanked the representatives for their attendance.

#### **6. Oral Evidence Session Belfast City Council & Newry, Mourne and Down Council: Withdrawal of DAERA and Local Authority Staff from Ports**

The following representatives from the councils joined the meeting by StarLeaf at 10.58 a.m.

Suzanne Wylie, Chief Executive, Belfast City Council

Siobhan Toland, Director of City Services, Belfast City Council

Marie Ward, Chief Executive, Newry, Mourne and Down District Council

Owen Devlin Assistant Director Health and Well Being, Newry, Mourne and Down District Council.

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 declared an interest that he is a member of the Northern Ireland Policing Board.

The Chairperson thanked the representatives for their attendance.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to publish the council written briefings on the Committee's webpage.



**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to write to Belfast City Council and Newry, Mourne and Down Council to seek clarification on whether the Cabinet Office has written to both councils regarding the letter issued by Anne Donaghy.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to write to SOLACE to request the Terms of Reference for the EU Task and Finish Sub-Group, along with the minutes of the meetings for the period January to March 2021.

## **7. RaiSe Written Briefing: Nature Friendly Farming**

**Noted:** The Committee noted the RaiSe written briefing on Nature Friendly Farming

## **8. Oral Evidence Session: Nature Friendly Farming Network (NFFN)**

The following representatives of NFFN joined the meeting by StarLeaf at 11.48 a.m.

Michael Meharg, NI Chair

Tim Morrow, NI Steering Group Member

David Sandford, NI Steering Group Member

Simon Best, NI Steering Group Member

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

The oral evidence session was reported by Hansard.

Mr Bradley rejoined the meeting at 12.10 p.m.

The Chairperson thanked the representatives for their attendance.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to publish the NFFN's briefing paper on the Committee website.



### **9. Departmental Written Briefing: Advice from the UK Climate Change Committee (CCC)**

The Committee considered the written briefing from the UK Climate Change Committee on the economic implications for setting and delivering the 2050 emissions target for Northern Ireland.

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

### **10. Departmental Written Briefing: Plan to Reduce Unnecessary Plastics in the Government Estate**

The Committee considered the departmental written briefing on the Plan to Reduce Unnecessary Plastics in the Government Estate.

**Agreed:** Members agreed to forward any further questions for the Department on the written briefing to the clerk by close of play.

### **11. Departmental Written Briefing: Ministerial Response to the Committee's Proposals – Independent Panel for the Review of Decision Process**

The Committee considered the written briefing which contains the Minister's response to the Committee's proposals on its review of the Independent Panel for Review of Decisions.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to publish the departmental written briefing on the Committee's webpage.



### **12. Departmental Written Briefing: Budget 2021/22**

The Committee noted the departmental written briefing on the DAERA budget proposals for 2021/22. Members were advised to forward any questions on the budget briefing to the clerk by close of play.

### **13. Departmental Written Briefing: EU Transition Update**

The Committee noted the departmental written update on EU Transition.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to forward any questions for the Department on the EU Transition Update to the clerk by close of play.

### **14. Departmental Written Briefing: The Sea Fish Industry (Coronavirus) (Fixed Costs) Scheme (Northern Ireland) 2021**

The Committee considered the departmental written briefing on the Sea Fish Industry (Coronavirus) (Fixed Costs) Scheme (Northern Ireland) 2021 and noted that the Examiner of Statutory Rules had advised the Department of an error in the SR in that the powers cited in making it (section 15(1) and (2) of the Fisheries Act 1981) had been repealed in the Fisheries Act 2020 in November 2020. Furthermore, the Department has no power to make the scheme and it has no legal effect. The Committee further noted that the Department intends to remake the Scheme citing the correct powers in the Fisheries Act and will come into operation following Assembly debate and affirmative resolution.

### **15. Committee Written Briefing: Consideration of the work plan for the Horse Racing (Amendment) Bill**

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to defer consideration of the agenda item until the meeting on 6 May 2021.



## 16. Correspondence

The Committee noted the following:

- i. Correspondence from the Department on the publication of the draft 3rd Cycle River Basin Management Plan;
- ii. Correspondence from the Committee for Infrastructure on correspondence it has received from Alex Easton MLA on the sale of Portavoe Reservoir which has issued to the DAERA for information and comment.
- iii. Correspondence from the EU Affairs Manager providing an update on Common Frameworks.
- iv. Correspondence from the Committee for Finance in a reply to Jim Shannon MP in respect of Single Farm Payments and historic liabilities.
- v. Correspondence from the Department advising that it has laid its Retention and Disposal Schedule in the Assembly's Business Office.
- vi. Correspondence from the Department in respect of issues raised at the Committee meeting on 25 March 2021.
- vii. Copied correspondence from ACA(NI) to the Department requesting a meeting to discuss the Appeals System following the SFP application period has ended.
- viii. Correspondence from the Committee for the Economy on a follow-up action from the joint committee meeting with HMRC and TSS.
- ix. Correspondence from Mr B Little regarding correspondence he has had with Mr Jim Shannon MP.
- x. Copied correspondence from the Committee for the Economy to DAERA on the importation of bees.
- xi. The ISNI Investing Activity Report for April 2021.
- xii. Copied correspondence from the Department to the Committee for Infrastructure call for evidence on Decarbonising Road Transport in Northern Ireland.
- xiii. Copied correspondence from the Department to Mr Jim Shannon MP, Michelle McIlveen MLA and Mr Harry Harvey MLA on a payment to Rural Support to assist farmers going through the appeal process.





The Committee considered correspondence from a journalist who has requested a copy of the departmental written briefing on EU Animal Health Law which was considered at the meeting on 15 April 2021, which the Department is content to release.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to publish the departmental written briefing on EU Animal Health Law on its webpage and advise the journalist in question accordingly.

The Committee considered correspondence from the Department on issues raised at the meeting on 18 March 2021.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to forward the departmental briefing provided on the Islandmagee Gas Storage Construction Licence issue to the original correspondent.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to publish the departmental written briefing provide on the Digital Assistance Scheme on the Committee's webpage.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to write to the Department to request an update on the potential for the creation of central register for people convicted of animal welfare offences.

## **17. Forward Work Programme**

The Committee considered the draft Forward Work Programme and noted a number of amendments and the deferral of the Committee consideration of written evidence on the potential Committee Motion for Nature Friendly Farming.

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

## **18. AOB**

None.



### **19. Date and time of the next meeting**

The next meeting of the Committee for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs will take place on Thursday 6 May 2021 at 9.30 a.m.

The meeting was adjourned at 13.03pm.

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