



Committee for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs

Minutes of Proceedings

Thursday 4 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

Suzie Cave, Research Officer (Agenda item 6)

The meeting commenced at 9.32 a.m. in open session

1. Apologies

None.

2. Chairperson's Business

The Chairperson advised the Committee that the Minister has confirmed his attendance for the meeting on 11 March 2021 to brief the Committee on his priorities.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to schedule the Minister into the 9.30 a.m. slot that had been reserved for DAERA on Operational Issues and EU Exit.

The Chairperson advised the Committee that the UK Parliament is submitting a bid to host events at COP26 and Members previously agreed to be involved in this along with other legislatures. A draft bid has now been prepared and will be submitted tomorrow and requires a statement of support from the Committee. This will enable representation from the Assembly and this committee once events have been finalised.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to add the following line into the UK Parliament's bid to host events at COP26:

"This proposal is supported in principle by the Northern Ireland Assembly Committee for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs".



Agreed: The Committee agreed that the Chairperson and Deputy Chairperson would represent the Committee at a roundtable discussion on COP26 with representatives from other legislatures on 15 March 2021.

3. Draft Minutes

Agreed: The Committee agreed the minutes of the meeting held on 25 February 2021.

4. Matters arising

None.

5. Departmental Oral Evidence Session: Update on the Construction and Staffing at Border Control Posts/Points of Entry

The following departmental officials joined the meeting at 9.37 a.m.

Dr Denis McMahon, Permanent Secretary

Dr Robert Huey, Chief Veterinary Officer

Mark Livingstone, Grade 5, Brexit Contingency Planning

Norman Fulton, Head of Food and Farming Branch

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

The oral evidence session was reported by Hansard.

The Chairperson left the meeting at 10.40 a.m. The Deputy Chairperson assumed the Chair.

The Chairperson re-joined the meeting at 10.43 a.m. and resumed the Chair.



The Chairperson thanked the officials for their attendance.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department to request a written briefing on the Digital Assurance Scheme, following the design phase workshop later this month.

6. RaiSe Briefing: NI Contribution to UK Net Zero

The Assembly Research Officer, Suzie Cave, joined the meeting at 11.13 a.m.

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

The Chairperson thanked the Research Officer for her briefing.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to request further research on the impact of the Protocol on the UK contribution to net zero.

7. Written Briefing: Consideration of Responses to the Climate Change Committee's advice to NI on Emission Targets

Noted: The Committee noted the written responses from stakeholders in relation to the Climate Change Committee's advice to NI on Emission Targets.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to publish the written responses on the Committee's webpage.

8. Oral Evidence Session: Climate Change Committee

The following Members of the Climate Change Committee joined the meeting at 11.35 a.m.

Lord Deben, Chairperson



Chris Stark, Chief Executive

Keith Bell, Committee Member

The Members of the Climate Change Committee briefed the Committee and this was followed by a question and answer session.

The oral evidence session was reported by Hansard.

9. Departmental Written Briefing: SR 2021/40 The Direct Payments to Farmers (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2021

Noted: The Committee noted that SR 2021/40 The Direct Payments to Farmers (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2021 have been affirmed by the Assembly on 22 February 2021.

10. Departmental Written Briefing: SR 2021/42 The Direct Payments to Farmers (Simplifications) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2021

Noted: The Committee noted that SR 2021/42 The Direct Payments to Farmers (Simplifications) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2021 have been affirmed by the Assembly on 22 February 2021.

11. Departmental Written Briefing: Covid-19 Update

Noted: The Committee noted the Department's Covid-19 update and Members were asked to forward questions for the Department to the clerk by close of play.

12. Correspondence

The Committee noted the following:



- i. Correspondence from Carla Lockhart MP on Apportioning Additional Quota between the UK Administrations.
- ii. Correspondence from the EU Affairs Manager on a letter from the House of Lords EU Committee regarding EM 13944/20: Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council concerning batteries and waste batteries, repealing Directive 2006/66/EC and amending Regulation (EU) No. 2019/1020.
- iii. Correspondence from Ulster Wool regarding the holding response it has received from the Minister regarding a request by the industry for funding due to financial loss during Covid-19.
- iv. Correspondence from ISNI on the Investing Activity Report – February 2021.
- v. Correspondence from Robin Newton MLA on PMB he intends to bring to the Assembly on Lucy's Law.
- vi. Correspondence from John Blair MLA on a PMB he intends to bring to the Assembly on Hunting Wild Mammals with Dogs.

The Committee considered correspondence from the House of Commons Environmental Audit Committee on an Inquiry it is undertaking into 'Next steps for deposit return schemes'.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to request an urgent written briefing from the Department on a range of issues connected to a Deposit Return Scheme.

The Committee considered correspondence from a member of the public on the Mourne Mountain Trust Election 2021.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to forward the correspondence to the Department to request a written briefing on the issues raised, subject to agreement by the member of the public.

The Committee considered copied correspondence from the Ulster Beekeepers Association to the Minister on issues around the importation of bees from GB to NI.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department to request that is copied the Committee into its response to the Ulster Beekeepers Association.



13. Forward Work Programme

Agreed: The Committee agreed to reschedule the informal meeting with the Office of Environmental Protection until 15 April 2021 at 2.30 p.m. The Committee noted a number of amendments to the Forward Work Programme.

Agreed: The Committee agreed the Forward Work Programme.

14. AOB

Agreed: The Committee agreed to request further information on what steps the Department is taking to encourage horticulture businesses to apply for the Horticulture Covid-19 Fund which currently has an underspend of one million pounds.

Agreed: The Committee also agreed to ask when the existing successful applicants would be paid.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to request sight of the final report on the ‘Test and Vaccinate or Remove’ (TVR).

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write a letter of condolence to Mrs Spratt following the death of her husband, Jimmy Spratt.

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 11 March 2021 at 9.30 a.m.

The meeting was adjourned at 1:13 p.m.



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Declan McAleer MLA

Chairperson, Committee for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs