



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Committee for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs

Minutes of Proceedings

Thursday 25 November 2021

Meeting Location: Room 30/Virtual Meeting via StarLeaf

Present: Declan McAleer MLA (Chairperson)

Present by Video or Teleconference:

Philip McGuigan MLA (Deputy Chairperson)
Clare Bailey MLA
Rosemary Barton MLA
John Blair MLA
Thomas Buchanan MLA
Harry Harvey MLA
William Irwin MLA
Patsy McGlone MLA

Apologies: None

Present: Nick Henry, Clerk
Oliver Bellew, Assistant Clerk
Emma Magee, Clerical Officer

In Attendance by Video or Teleconference:

Elaine Farrell, Clerical Supervisor
Simon Kelly, Assembly Legal Services (Agenda Item 5)
Barbara Love, Bill Office Clerk (Agenda Item 5 and 12)

The meeting commenced at 10.01 a.m. in Open Session



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1. Apologies

None

2. Chairperson's Business

Climate Change (No.1) Bill

The Chairperson reminded Members of the 16 December 2021 deadline for reporting on the Climate Change (No.1) Bill and the need to complete clause-by-clause scrutiny of it.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to hold an additional virtual meeting on Thursday 2 December with a view to completing the clause-by-clause scrutiny and agreeing its Bill Report.

Green Growth Strategy Consultation

The Chairperson reminded Members of a webinar which the Minister is scheduled to host in relation to the Department's consultation on the Green Growth Strategy. The Chairperson informed Members that the Clerk had issued a reminder to all other Committee Clerks

3. Draft Minutes

Agreed: The Committee agreed the minutes of the meeting held on 18 November 2021.

4. Matters Arising

The Chairperson informed Members that the UK Government has held a number of meetings with specialised committees in relation to the Trade and Cooperation Agreement. The Committee noted that the meetings have been attended by



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officials of the various Northern Ireland Civil Service Departments.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department to seek clarity on what engagement it has had with these committees.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to move into Closed Session.

The meeting moved into Closed Session at 10.03 a.m.

5. Informal Deliberations: The Climate Change (No.1) Bill

The Chairperson reminded Members that, at the previous meeting of the Committee, a request for legal advice pertaining to some of the provisions in the Climate Change (No.1) Bill had been made.

The Committee noted a briefing paper by Legal Services in response to the request.

The Chairperson welcomed Simon Kelly, Legal Services, to the meeting and thanked him for his prompt provision of written legal advice, and invited him to brief the Committee.

This was followed by a questions from Members.

The meeting moved into Open Session at 10.35 a.m.

6. Written Briefing – Assembly Research and Information Services

The Committee noted a written briefing by Assembly Research and Information Services on the potential financial implications of the proposed emissions targets as set out in both the Climate Change (No.1) and (No.2) Bills.

The Chairperson welcomed Christopher Rothwell, RaISe, to the meeting and invited him to brief the Committee.

This was followed by questions from Members.



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Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department to outline the findings of the RalSe paper and the Climate Change Committee's advice, and to request that it revises the financial cost of net-zero emissions by 2050. The Committee also agreed to request that any former statements by the Department in relation to a £900 million projection be clarified.

Agreed: It was also agreed that the Clerk would forward a copy of the CCC's advice on projections for the incurrence of a £900 million cost.

7. Correspondence

The Committee noted the following items of correspondence:

- i. Response from the Committee on Procedures in relation to the procedural feasibility of establishing a new Standing Committee to consider Climate Change in the future.
Agreed: Members agreed to write to the Committee on Procedures to thank it for providing clarity on the matter;
- ii. Departmental correspondence in respect of funding allocations for the Green Growth Strategy.
- iii. Departmental confirmation of its availability to brief the Committee on the impact of the prospective trade deals with Australia and New Zealand.
Agreed: The Committee agreed to request a Departmental briefing on the matter for the meeting on 27 January 2022;
- iv. Departmental response in relation to Direct Payments to Farmers Simplification Regulations and the Science Transformation Programme;
- v. Departmental response in relation to potential future compensation that may be necessary due to the suspension of work on infrastructure as necessitated by the protocol;
- vi. Departmental response in relation to engagement with the Gas Industry and the Department for the Economy in respect of the prospect of harnessing biogenic methane in the gas network. The response also outlined that the Minister is actively considering the Ammonia Strategy and that it is expected to be published soon;
Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department to seek a bi-monthly update on the progress of the Biomethane Stakeholder



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vii. Group and to seek a copy of its Terms of Reference and Membership; Departmental response in relation to Committee queries in respect of the proposed Dalradian Gold Mine in County Tyrone;

Agreed: The Committee agreed to seek an oral briefing from the NI Environment Agency its due process responsibilities in respect of the Dalradian site.

viii. Departmental response in relation to its regulatory impact assessment on the Climate Change (No.2) Bill and in particular the net-zero position in 2050;

ix. Departmental correspondence containing an updated Environmental Covid-19 Dashboard to September 2021;

x. Correspondence from a member of the public in relation to energy prices and the efficacy of renewable energy sources;

xi. Ministerial invitation to a webinar in relation to the Green Growth Strategy.

8. Forward Work Programme

Members noted the Department's intention to brief the Committee in respect of the outcomes of the Bovine TB eradication proposals. The Chairperson informed Members that the briefing would only cover the results of the consultation and that future policy provision would be determined at a later date.

Agreed: The Committee agreed the Forward Work Programme.

9. Any Other Business

Issues facing Pig Farmers

The Committee discussed issues facing pig farmers as a result of the shortage of butchery workers, CO2 supplies and the importation of lower cost pork produce.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department to:

- Highlight the issue of pork processors enforcing prices on producers;
- Ascertain what oversight DAERA has of this issue; and, Ask why farmers are charged a premium rate on Saturdays.



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Appointments to the AFBI Board

The Committee discussed the issue of recent appointments to the Agri-Food and Biosciences Institute Board.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to seek assurance that due process was observed in respect of the appointments to the Board.

10. 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 2 December 2021 at 10.00 a.m. and will be a hybrid meeting streamed on the Assembly's website.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to move in to Closed Session.

The meeting moved to Closed Session at 11.35 a.m.

11. Oral Briefing – DAERA: Future Agricultural Policy Framework Portfolio

Members noted a Departmental tabled paper containing background information on the Future Agricultural Policy Framework Portfolio.

The Chairperson welcomed the following officials and invited them to brief the Committee:

- Norman Fulton – Deputy Secretary, DAERA
- Dr Rosemary Agnew – Director of Transition Policy, DAERA

The officials briefed the Committee. This was followed by a questions from Members.

The Chairperson thanked the officials.



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12. Climate Change (No.2) Bill: Informal Deliberations

To assist the Committee's informal deliberations of the Climate Change (No.2) Bill, Members noted a Stakeholders Analysis Report; a table of suggested amendments relating to the Bill; a summary of Carbon Budgets and Reporting; a summary of Public Duty Adaptation Programme; and, the Government Department Duty.

The Chairperson reminded Members that the Committee had written to the Departmental Bill Team in relation to possible amendments on emission clauses; a commitment to non-regression in terms of emission targets, years and baselines; and, Transboundary Considerations.

The following Departmental Officials joined the meeting via StarLeaf at 12.36pm.

Colin Breen, Director of Environmental Policy Division
Anthony Courtney, Grade 7, Environmental Policy Division
Arlene McGowan, Grade 7, Environmental Policy Division

The Officials briefed the Committee and this was followed by questions from Members.

Harry Harvey MLA and John Blair MLA left the meeting at 12.45 p.m.

The Chairperson thanked the officials for their attendance.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to request that consideration be given to a Departmental amendment to Clause 15 to ensure that the powers contained within would not be used to delay action on climate change and/or prolong the emissions targets.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that the Department should consider amending the Bill to ensure that due regard is given to Just Transition principles by government when developing plans/policies to meet the emissions targets, including reference to the agricultural sector.



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The Chairperson left the meeting at 1.08 p.m. and the Deputy Chairperson assumed the Chair.

The Chairperson resumed the Chair at 1.15 p.m.

The Chairperson thanked the officials for the briefing.

The meeting was adjourned at 1.22 p.m.

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