



Northern Ireland  
Assembly

# Committee for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs

## Minutes of Proceedings

Thursday 11 November 2021

**Meeting Location:** Room 30/Virtual Meeting via StarLeaf

**Present by Video or Teleconference:**

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

**Apologies:** Patsy McGlone MLA

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

**In Attendance by Video or Teleconference:**  
Elaine Farrell, Clerical Supervisor



## Northern Ireland Assembly

The meeting commenced at 9.33 a.m. in Open Session

### 1. Apologies

Patsy McGlone MLA

### 2. Chairperson's Business

#### Act of Remembrance

The Chairperson reminded Members that an Act of Remembrance Service was scheduled to take place at 10.55 a.m.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to suspend proceedings between 10.50 a.m. and 11.30 a.m.

#### Active Travel Programme

The Chairperson updated Members on the Active Travel Programme presentation by Sustrans, and the subsequent e-bike trial which some members of the Committee had attended on Wednesday 10 November 2021.

The presentation and trial were the last in a series of events by the Committee to mark COP26.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to write to representatives of Sustrans to thank them for their participation in facilitating the event. The Committee also agreed to write to DAERA and the Department of Infrastructure to outline its support for active travel programmes and what, if any, plans there are to support these initiatives.



Northern Ireland  
Assembly

SL5 The Direct Payments to Farmers (Simplifications) Regulations 2022

The Committee noted tabled papers relating to the SL5 Direct Payments to Farmers (Simplifications) Regulations 2022.

The Chairperson informed Members that the regulations had been laid in the Business Office on 8 November 2021.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to forward the regulations to the Examiner of Statutory Rules for consideration.

**3. Draft Minutes**

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed the minutes of the meeting held on 4 November 2021.

**4. Matters Arising**

None

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

The meeting moved into Closed Session at 9.36 a.m.

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

Members noted a briefing paper by the Bill Clerk in relation to a request for a Committee amendment to carry out a Small and Micro Business Impact Test (SAMBIT) in the development of the Climate Action Plans.



## Northern Ireland Assembly

The Chairperson invited Barbara Love, Bill Clerk to brief the Committee on her paper.

The Bill Office's advice that the inclusion of an amendment that specifically referenced the SAMBIT may be deemed inadmissible and outside the scope of the Bill by the Speaker was communicated to Members.

Members considered potential options for inclusion of wording to take account of the need to consider issues small and medium sized enterprises face when developing CAPs.

Members noted a further briefing paper by the Committee Clerk detailing proposed Committee amendments which had been proposed at the meeting on 4 November.

The Chairperson invited the Committee Clerk to brief Members on the proposed wording of the amendments.

The Committee Clerk briefed Members on the amendments and reminded them of the process for proposing amendments during the Committee and Consideration Stages of a Bill.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to suspend the meeting due to technical difficulties with broadcasting equipment.

The Committee suspended at 10.32 a.m.

The meeting resumed in Closed Session at 10.48 a.m.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed, given the technical difficulties, to suspend the scheduled clause-clause decision making on Climate Change (No.1) Bill.

The meeting suspended at 10.50 a.m.



## Northern Ireland Assembly

The meeting resumed in Public Session at 11.31 a.m. with the following Members present:

Declan McAleer MLA (Chairperson)  
Philip McGuigan MLA (Deputy Chairperson)  
Rosemary Barton MLA  
John Blair MLA  
Thomas Buchanan MLA  
Harry Harvey MLA  
William Irwin MLA

### **6. Written Briefing, DAERA: Support Scheme for Animal Establishments**

The Committee noted a departmental briefing paper which detailed proposals for a Covid-19 support package for animal establishments including zoos, open farms, kennels and catteries.

The Chairperson informed Members that the aforementioned establishments were unable to avail of government support during the pandemic despite having to continue to provide for the animals in their care.

The Committee noted that the cost of the scheme is likely to be met from the Covid19 Market Support budget and was anticipated to be in the region of £2.5 million.

**Agreed:** The Committee noted the information, and the results of the associated consultation, and agreed to write to the Department to express its content with the policy proposals in principle.

### **7. Written Briefing, DAERA: EU Commission's "Fit for 55" Package**



## Northern Ireland Assembly

The Committee noted a Departmental written briefing on the EU's "Fit for 55" Package.

The Chairperson informed Members that the package sought to reduce carbon emissions by 55% by 2030 and as electricity generators in Northern Ireland remain part of the EU Emissions Trading Scheme, they would be subject to "Fit for 55" provisions.

Members noted from the paper that local generators would be subject to more stringent emissions caps as there was no agreement in place to link EU and UK emission targets.

The Chairperson informed Members of a levy on imports from outside the EU in respect of steel, aluminium, iron, cement and electricity.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to write to the Department of Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy to seek confirmation on what, if any, discussions, plans or intentions exist to align the UK and EU Emission Trading Schemes in order to avoid divergences and potential disruption for businesses.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to write to the Minister for the Economy to seek his Department's views on the Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism and its potential impact on local businesses and the economy.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to write to the Department to seek clarity on whether any scoping exercises will be undertaken to look at changes similar to the proposals under the "Fit for 55" package and to change how emissions are currently accounted for.

Ms Clare Bailey re-joined the meeting at 11.40 a.m.

### **8. Written Briefing, DAERA: Draft Environment Strategy for Northern Ireland**



## Northern Ireland Assembly

Members noted correspondence from the Department in relation to the Executive's approval of its draft Environment Strategy for Northern Ireland.

The Chairperson invited the Committee Clerk to brief Members on the salient points of the draft document.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to request a Departmental oral briefing on the draft strategy in advance of its consultation closing.

### **9. Oral Briefing, Other Stakeholders: Climate Change (No.2) Bill**

The following representatives of various organisations joined the meeting via StarLeaf at 11.50 a.m.

Neil Hutcheson – Federation of Small Businesses  
Ray Parmenter – Chartered Institute of Waste Management (NI)  
Tim Walker - Chartered Institute of Waste Management (NI)  
Dr Annika Clements – Ulster Wildlife Trust  
Nichola Hughes – Sustainable NI

The representatives briefed the Committee on their views of the Climate Change (No.2) Bill.

This was followed by a question and answer session.

The Chairperson left the meeting at 12.37 p.m. and the Deputy Chairperson assumed the Chair.

The Chairperson re-joined the meeting at 1.07 p.m. and assumed the Chair.

The Chairperson thanked the representatives for the briefing.



## Northern Ireland Assembly

### 10. Correspondence

The Committee noted the following items of correspondence and agreed that they be actioned as follows:

- i. Correspondence from the Business Office containing DAERA's six-yearly report on the marine plans for local offshore and inshore regions;
- ii. Correspondence from RHANI highlighting the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy's strategical view on the role of biomass energy.
- iii. Correspondence from the House of Lords Committee on the Protocol to DEFRA seeking clarity on the interaction between EU Regulation 2021/1280, the Protocol and the Animal Health and Welfare Common Framework;
- iv. Tabled correspondence from Minister Poots to advise Members of his intention to make statements on Tuesday 9 November 2021 on the draft Environment and Green Growth strategies;
- v. Tabled correspondence from the Department to advise of its intention to lay relevant regulations pertaining to Edible Crabs in December 2021 and to provide the Committee with a briefing on the consultation regarding single use plastics;
- vi. Tabled correspondence from the Department to advise that some of the cross-cutting issues precluding progress with the Common Frameworks were addressed in a meeting in September 2021 and a follow up meeting with representatives from all jurisdictions is planned for early November 2021;
- vii. Tabled correspondence from the Department to apologise for recent delays in providing papers and an assurance to endeavour to facilitate papers in line with the agreed Assembly protocol. The Department has also advised that, where it foresees a delay in papers, it will notify the Committee in advance;
- viii. Tabled correspondence from the Department to advise of upcoming strategies including:
  - Agricultural Policy Framework;
  - Eradication of bovine TB;
  - Rural Policy Framework; and,
  - Ammonia Strategy which the Minister is actively considering and for which the Department intends to publish a consultation.
- ix. Tabled correspondence from the Department to advise that QUB, AFBI and Teagasc are collaboratively progressing several projects including:





## Northern Ireland Assembly

- Evaluating the Feasibility of organic soil in terms of sequestration;
- Effect of reseeded and liming on intensively managed soil stocks; - Novel methods of reducing on-farm emissions including impact of different feeds; and,
- Future modelling of GHG emissions from land use and agriculture.

They are also developing a project to update and enhance the marginal abatement cost curve which will enable farmers to gain credit for emissions mitigation; and, requesting that the Committee endeavours to complete its scrutiny of the Climate Change (No.2) Bill as soon as possible in order to ensure that there is sufficient time for the Assembly to consider it before the end of the Mandate.

### **11. Forward Work Programme**

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

### **12. Any Other Business**

None .

### **13. 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 18 November 2021 at 10.00 a.m. and will be a hybrid meeting streamed on the Assembly's website.

### **14. Informal Deliberations on Climate Change (No.1) Bill**



## Northern Ireland Assembly

The Committee resumed informal deliberations in closed session and agreed that the Bill Sponsor would seek to provide finalised wording on the outstanding areas of amendment and points of clarity to the Committee to enable it to proceed to clause by clause decision making on 18 November:

- Terminology around the Just Transition Fund for Agriculture (Clause 3A) to be reviewed and finalised
- Terminology around the duty on public bodies to be reviewed and finalised
- Provision for taking account of the needs of small and medium sized enterprises when consulting on Climate Action Plans/sectoral plans (in light of Bill Office advice)
- Consideration of an amendment with regards to the use of nature-based solutions to be included
- Clarification on the policy intent of Clause 6 (8)
- Clarification on the policy intent of Clause 10 (3)

**Agreed:** the Committee would write to the Bill Sponsor seeking this information

The meeting was adjourned at 1.34 p.m.

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