



Northern Ireland  
Assembly

# Committee for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs

## Minutes of Proceedings

Thursday 9 December 2021

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

**Present:** Declan McAleer MLA (Chairperson)  
Patsy McGlone MLA

**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

**Apologies:** None

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

**In Attendance by Video or Teleconference:**

Elaine Farrell, Clerical Supervisor  
Barbara Love, Bill Office Clerk (for Agenda Item 15)



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The meeting commenced at 10.03 a.m. in Open Session

**1. Apologies**

None

**2. Chairperson's Business**

None.

**3. Draft Minutes**

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed the minutes of the meeting held on 2 December 2021.

**4. Matters Arising**

SR 2021/321 - The Spring Traps Approval (Amendment) Order (NI) 2021

The Chairperson reminded Members that the policy proposals for the Spring Traps SR had been considered at the meeting on 2 December 2021 and these have subsequently been laid in the Business Office.

Members noted that the Statutory Rule is subject to Negative Resolution.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to forward the proposals to the Examiner of Statutory Rules for comment.



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## 5. Oral Briefing: DAERA - Avian Influenza Prevention Zone

The Chairperson informed Members of a number of recent positive cases of Avian Influenza in Northern Ireland and that a cull and disposal exercise had been carried out on a duck flock in Aughnacloy.

Members noted that, because of the continued spread of avian influenza, the Department had been invited to provide an urgent briefing to the Committee.

The following departmental officials joined the meeting via StarLeaf at 10.05 a.m.

Jim Blee - Deputy Director, Animal Health and Welfare Division  
Julian Henderson - Senior Principal Veterinary Officer

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

The Chairperson thanked the officials for their attendance.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to write to the Department to ascertain;

- When the first suspected case of avian influenza was reported in Belfast;
- A timeline of the events surrounding the management of the incident, including all direct communications with Belfast City Council; and,
- The requisite number of days a bird farm must remain fallow before re-stocking following a cull.

**Agreed:** Members agreed to write to the Department to thank officials for briefing the Committee at such short notice and to request that it provide a monthly update on the issue until the end of the current mandate.

## 6. Written Briefing: DAERA - Progress against Business Plan 2021/22 Targets

The Committee noted a written briefing by the Department in relation to progress against the Business Plan 2021/22 targets, including four that remain at amber alert level.



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**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to seek a written update on the progress of all amber rated targets.

### 7. Oral Briefing: DAERA –Bovine TB Strategy Consultation Outcomes

The Committee noted a summary of responses to the Department’s consultation on the proposed implementation and next steps of the bovine TB Eradication Strategy for Northern Ireland.

Mr William Irwin MLA declared an interest as the owner of a farm which had been affected by TB.

The following departmental officials joined the meeting via Starleaf at 11.08 a.m.:

Neal Gartland, Director of Animal Health and Welfare  
Michael Hatch, Deputy Chief Veterinary Officer  
Raymond Kirke, TB Strategy, VEU and Wildlife Unit  
Seamus Murray, TB BR Policy Branch

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

The Chairperson thanked the officials for their attendance.

### 8. Written Briefing: DAERA – The Sea Fishing (Amendment etc.) (No.2) Regulations 2021

The Committee considered policy proposals for the Sea Fishing (Amendment etc.) (No.2) Regulations 2021, which were scheduled to come into effect on 31 December 2021.

**Agreed:** It was agreed that Members’ comments would be submitted to the Committee Office for dissemination to the Department.



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**9. Written Briefing: DAERA – SL1 The Marine Protected Areas (Prohibition of Fishing Methods) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2022**

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to defer its consideration of this item, as Departmental papers had not been received. The Committee also agreed to write to the Department to express its discontent at papers not being received in sufficient time for the meeting.

**10. Written Briefing: DAERA – SL1 The Scallop Enhancement Sites (Prohibited Methods of Fishing) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2022**

The Committee considered the SL1 The Scallop Enhancement Sites (Prohibited Methods of Fishing) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2022 and noted that the Rule will prohibit certain methods of fishing in four scallop enhancement sites.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to write to the Department outlining that it is content with the policy proposals as drafted and that it progresses to the next legislative phase

The Committee noted the following items of correspondence:

- i. Correspondence from Renewable NI containing a report it had commissioned with partners in respect of the potential viability of the onshore wind sector in terms of delivering the Green Growth strategy. The correspondence included an offer to brief the Committee on the outcome of the report;  
**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to accept an oral briefing.
- ii. Departmental correspondence to advise of its intention to consult on the introduction of regulations to prohibit the landing of soft shell brown crab. The Department advised that it will launch the consultation following comments from Members;  
**Agreed:** It was agreed that Members would forward any comments they may have to the Department.
- iii. The Agricultural and Horticultural Development Board 2020-21 Annual Report and Accounts;



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- iv. The Livestock and Meat Commission Annual Report 2020-21 Annual Report and Accounts;
- v. Correspondence from the Department in relation to the Soil Nutrient Health Scheme;
- vi. Correspondence from the CAMS Office in relation to Deaf Awareness sessions which had been organised for Members;  
**Agreed:** It was agreed that any Member wishing to avail of the sessions would contact the CAMS Office directly.
- vii. Correspondence from the Department in relation to issues raised at the Committee meeting on 18 November 2021;
- viii. Correspondence from members of the public in relation to their concerns about the prospective passage of the Hunting of Wild Mammals Bill;
- ix. Correspondence between UFU and the Minister seeking Departmental support in respect of measures to address sheep scab in local sheep farms;
- x. Update from the Minister on the draft Fisheries Framework Outline Agreement and the Memorandum of Understanding;  
**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to write to the Minister to thank him for providing a high-level summary of the main components of the Agreement.
- xi. Tabled response from Minister Mallon to the Committee's query on planning applications necessitating ammonia advice. The Minister highlighted that DAERA's internal operational protocol for advising on such matters must be updated in line with relevant case law,  
**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to reply to the Minister with thanks and to request an update from the Department in respect of their operational protocol.



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### 11. Forward Work Programme

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

### 12. Any Other Business

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed that correspondence received from Minister Swann in respect of commissioning mental health services in rural areas and which was noted at the meeting of 2 December 2021, be forwarded to the Rural Community Network for information.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to write to the Department to seek information on mental health service provision for farmers whose herd has tested positive for TB.

### 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 16 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 into Closed Session.

The meeting moved into Closed Session at 12.03 p.m.



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The Chairperson left the meeting at 12.04 p.m. and the Deputy Chairperson assumed the Chair.

### **14. Informal Deliberations: Climate Change (No.2) Bill**

To assist the Committee's informal deliberations of the Bill, Members noted a table of suggested amendments; a summary of the feedback arising in the call-for-evidence pertaining to the provisions around Adaptation reporting and government responsibilities, a Departmental paper in relation to the implications of the global methane pledge; a Departmental paper on the accounting methods for methane and greenhouse gases; and, supplementary matters.

The Chairperson informed Members that the Department had indicated that it believed that all forms of methane are encompassed in the pledge agreed at COP26 to deliver a global reduction in methane of 30% by 2030, but that it was uncertain whether all signatory countries are to deliver this independently.

The Committee noted that no prior engagement had been carried out with devolved administrations before the UK government signed the pledge, but that DAERA had liaised with the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy to scope the potential outworkings.

The Chairperson informed Members that the Examiner of Statutory Rules had considered the delegated powers of the Bill, as drafted, and concluded that they were appropriate and that there was no need to draw the Committee's attention to any particular issue.

The following departmental officials joined the meeting via StarLeaf at 12.04 p.m.

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





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The Committee continued its informal deliberations on the Climate Change (No.2) Bill.

**Agreed:** It was agreed that the Departmental Bill Team would consider an addition to the Bill in respect of utilising nature-based solutions where possible in relation to policies and strategies for meeting emissions targets.

The meeting was adjourned at 1.07 p.m.

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