



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Committee for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs

Minutes of Proceedings

Thursday 20 January 2022

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



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The meeting commenced at 9.48 a.m. in Open Session.

1. Apologies

None.

2. Chairperson's Business

Organic Egg Sector

The Chairperson reminded Members that the Committee had written to the Department to seek clarity on issues associated with the Protocol for the local Organic Egg Sector.

Members noted that, in follow up conversations with the Clerk, the Department advised that engagements were ongoing between UFU, DEFRA and the Poultry Industry and that the Committee would be updated in due course.

Agreed: The Committee expressed its concern at the lack of response and agreed to write to the Department for a definitive deadline for the receipt of an update by 3rd February 2022..

Future Agricultural Policy Consultation End Date

The Chairperson informed Members that the Department had launched its consultation on the Future Agricultural Policy on 21 December 2021 for a period of eight weeks.

Agreed: As the consultation was launched over the Christmas period, and given that stakeholders may not have had an opportunity to complete it, the Committee agreed to request that the Department consider extending its deadline for responses.



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2022-2025 Multi-year Budget

The Chairperson informed Members that the Department had failed to provide papers for the scheduled briefing on the 2022-25 Multi-year Budget.

Members were reminded that the Committee had requested early sight of the budget proposals on 1 October 2021 and that a supporting oral briefing had been subsequently scheduled for 20 January 2022.

The Committee noted that the Clerk had been advised on Tuesday 18 January 2022 that papers would not be available and that officials would be unable to provide an oral briefing on the three-year budget.

Members noted that the Committee has a duty to report its consideration of DAERA budget proposals to the Committee for Finance in order to assist with its scrutiny of the overall budget position.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department to express its discontent at the situation and to insist that it is provided with papers and persons as a matter of urgency. The Committee also agreed that the correspondence should be copied to the Committee for Finance.

3. Draft Minutes

Agreed: The Committee agreed the minutes of the meeting held on 13 January 2022.

4. Matters Arising

None.



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5. Climate Change (No.2) Bill – Consideration of Draft Report

Members reviewed a draft Report on the Committee's consideration of the Climate Change (No.2) Bill which incorporated updated wording as agreed at the previous meeting of the Committee, including:

- Removal of point at Paragraph 10;
- Amendment to Paragraph 79 to reflect DAERA's comments;
- Amendments to Clauses one to three to reflect Members' comments;
- Amendment to a Member's comment in Clause 22;
- Amendment to a Member's comment in Clause 28a;
- Amendment to a Member's comment in Clause 39; and,
- Recommendation added to Clause 31 regarding the development of an operational policy by DAERA.

Agreed: The Committee agreed wording amendments to Paragraphs 36 and 214.

Agreed: The Committee noted the amendments and agreed that the Report be published.

Agreed: The Committee noted the amended draft Summary Report and agreed that it be published.

Agreed: Members agreed that the Citizen Space responses to the call-for-evidence be published on the Committee webpage.

The Chairperson thanked Members and the Committee Staff for their time and effort in progressing the Bill.

6. Oral Briefing: DAERA – 2021-22 Budget and Draft Budget 2022 Proposals

Members noted a range of papers relating to the 2021-22 Budget and the Department's draft proposals for financial year 2021-22.



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The Chairperson welcomed the following Departmental Officials to the meeting and invited them to brief the Committee:

Roger Downey – Finance Director

William Peel – Financial Planning Accountant

Richard McAuley – Deputy Finance Director

This was followed by questions from Members.

The Chairperson thanked the Officials for the briefing.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department to request that the proposed written briefing on the 2022-25 Budget includes commentary on the implications for policy should the full £600m bid for the Green Growth Strategy not be secured.

7. Oral Briefing: DAERA – Joint Fisheries Statement and Common Framework

The Chairperson welcomed the pupils of Dean Maguire College, Carrickmore who were following Committee proceedings to learn more about the work of the Committee and the Assembly.

The Committee noted papers in respect of the Joint Fisheries Statement and Common Framework which had been laid in the Business Office, and other jurisdictions, on 17 January 2022.

The Chairperson welcomed the following Departmental Officials to the meeting and invited them to brief the Committee:

Owen Lyttle – Director of Marine and Fisheries Division

David Steele – Marine and Fisheries Division

Paddy Campbell – Head of Fisheries Policy and Grants

This was followed by questions from Members.



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11.11 a.m. Patsy McGlone MLA joined the meeting.

11.17 a.m. the Chairperson left the meeting and the Deputy Chairperson assumed the Chair.

The Deputy Chairperson thanked the Officials for the briefing.

8. Oral Briefing: NI Fish Producers Organisation and Anglo-North Fish Producers Organisation – Joint Fisheries Statement and Common Framework

The Deputy Chairperson welcomed the following representatives and invited them to make a joint statement on behalf of their organisations:

Alan McCulla – Chief Executive, Anglo-North Fish Producers Organisation

Harry Wick – NI Fish Producers Organisation

This was followed by questions from Members.

The representatives extended an invitation to the Committee to visit one of its ports to discuss the process further, pending availability in the Forward Work Programme.

The Deputy Chairperson thanked the representatives for the briefing.

9. SR 2021/338 – The Single Use Carrier Bags Charge (Amendment) Regulations (NI) 2021

Members noted that the Examiner of Statutory Rules had updated the Clerk on issues relating to the proposed regulation, which, as the Rule necessitated cross-



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community support, would need to be laid again following discussion with the Department of Finance.

The Deputy Chairperson informed Members that the ESR had undertaken to expedite the referral of future advice on the matter to the Committee.

10. SR 2021/335 – The Edible Crabs (Undersized) (Amendment) Order (NI) 2021 and, SR 2021/336 – The Edible Crabs (Conservation) (Amendment) Regulations (NI) 2021

Agreed: The Committee for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs considered SR 2021/335 The Edible Crabs (Undersized) (Amendment) Order (NI) 2021 and had no objection to the rule.

Agreed: The Committee for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs considered SR 2021/336 The Edible Crabs (Conservation) (Amendment) Regulations (NI) 2021 and had no objection to the rule.

11. The Spring Traps Approval (Amendment) Order (NI) 2021

Agreed: As the rule was anticipated to be in the forthcoming ESR's Report, the Committee agreed to defer consideration of it until the meeting of 27 January 2022.

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

12. Clerk's Written Briefing: Women in Farm Management Mini-Inquiry

The Chairperson informed Members that the Call-for-Evidence on the Committee's mini-inquiry had closed and that 187 responses had been received.



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The Clerk informed Members of the next stage in the inquiry process, which included a stakeholder event scheduled for 3 February 2022.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to the handling arrangements for the Stakeholder Event including extending an invitation to the NI Agricultural Producers Association.

13. Correspondence

The Committee noted the following items of correspondence:

- i. Correspondence from the NI Chamber of Commerce and Industry in relation to its latest Quarterly Economic Survey results;
- ii. Departmental correspondence to the Committee for Economy outlining that it is unaware of any planned intervention by the UK government to utilise excess revenue from the ETS to offset high energy costs;
- iii. Departmental response to Committee queries regarding the £7.1m of reduced capital requirement that will be released as part of Stage One of the January Monitoring Round;
- iv. Departmental reply to the Committee's letter seeking its views in respect of the potential introduction of legislation to make microchipping of cats mandatory;
Agreed: To forward the reply to Cats Matter.
- v. Departmental response regarding the cost of Climate Change Bills outlining that it has engaged with the UK Committee on Climate Change in respect of outstanding information and is expecting a return by the end of January 2022. The Department anticipates being in a position to consider revision of its draft RIA as appropriate in early February 2022;
- vi. The Department has provided information regarding its 2021-22 anticipated budget, details of the four high-risk projects identified by CPD that it is managing and the details of the bids to support the Green Growth Strategy;



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- vii. Departmental response to the Committee's request to consider views from Trade Union Colleagues in respect of the proposals to dissolve the Agricultural Wages Board;
- viii. Departmental response to the Committee's queries regarding the impending Rural Policy Framework;
Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department to seek assurance that grassroots community groups will have input to the development of local policies and initiatives.
- ix. Correspondence from the House of Lords Scrutiny Committee on the Protocol to DEFRA seeking clarity on the referenced regulations in respect of their acceptability by stakeholders in Northern Ireland and on other matters;
- x. Correspondence from the House of Lords Scrutiny Committee on the Protocol to DEFRA seeking clarity on the potential impact to Northern Ireland should veterinary medicines not be removed from the scope of the Protocol through the on-going negotiations between the UK and EU and on other technical matters relating to this regulation;
- xi. Correspondence from the House of Lords Scrutiny Committee on the Protocol to DEFRA seeking clarity on the EU's response to the UK government's position on the re-identification of livestock moving from GB to NI is unnecessary and would be damaging to the industry from a cost perspective;
- xii. Correspondence from the House of Lords Scrutiny Committee on the Protocol has written to DEFRA seeking clarity on whether stakeholder in Northern Ireland and Great Britain about the relaxation of feed controls and intention to make use of these;
- xiii. Correspondence from the House of Lords Scrutiny Committee on the Protocol to DEFRA noting it retains an active interest in this regulation.

14. Forward Work Programme

Agreed: The Committee agreed the draft Forward Work Programme.



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15. Any Other Business

The Chairperson reminded Members of the Committee's engagement with DAERA, DEFRA and the Home Office in respect of labour market pressures particularly in relation to the pork sector.

Members noted that the latest correspondence highlighted the Home Office's scheme to allow 800 temporary visas for foreign pork butchers to enter the workforce.

The Clerk informed the Committee of his discussion with the Chief Executive of the NI Pork and Bacon Forum which highlighted increased pressure on the industry and the impact on animal welfare and the local economy.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to invite the NI Pork and Bacon Forum to brief on the on-going pressures and seemingly intractable difficulties in finding a resolution. Members agreed 3 February 2022 as the most appropriate date.

Agreed: The Committee discussed the recent announcement by Moy Park to scale down its operations because of labour market pressures, and agreed to invite its representatives to brief the Committee.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department of the Economy for its views on the increasing labour pressures on the local economy and for clarity on joined up working it may be conducting with other departments on this matter.

16. 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 27 January 2022 at 10.00 a.m. and will be a hybrid meeting streamed on the Assembly's website.



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Agreed: The Committee agreed to move to Closed Session.

The meeting moved to Closed Session at 12.22 p.m.

17. Committee discussion on TB Eradication Strategy Proposals

The Committee noted papers relating to the Department's proposals to help eradicate Bovine TB.

Mr William Irwin declared an interest as a farmer with a herd which was infected by TB.

The Committee discussed issues relating to:

- Gamma Interferon Testing;
- Testing of non-Bovines;
- Badger Culling;
- Compensation; and,
- Bio-security Measures.

Agreed: It was agreed that the Committee Office would draft a Committee position paper for Members' consideration.

The meeting was adjourned at 12.49 p.m.

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