



**Northern Ireland
Assembly**

COMMITTEE FOR THE ENVIRONMENT

MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS

**THURSDAY 12 SEPTEMBER 2013,
SENATE CHAMBER, PARLIAMENT BUILDINGS**

- Present: Ms Anna Lo MLA (Chairperson)
Ms Pam Brown MLA (Deputy Chairperson)
Mr Cathal Boylan MLA
Mr Tom Elliott MLA
Mrs Dolores Kelly MLA
Mr Barry McElduff MLA
Mr Ian Milne MLA
Lord Morrow MLA
Mr Peter Weir MLA
- In Attendance: Mrs Sheila Mawhinney (Assembly Clerk)
Mr Sean McCann (Assistant Assembly Clerk)
Mr Neil Sedgewick (Clerical Supervisor)
Ms Antoinette Bowen (Clerical Officer)
- Apologies: Mr Sydney Anderson
- Interests declared: Ms Pam Brown, Councillor, Antrim Borough Council.
Lord Morrow, Councillor, Dungannon and South Tyrone
Borough Council.
Mr Peter Weir, Councillor, North Down Borough Council.
Mrs Dolores Kelly, Member, National Health Service
Superannuation Scheme.

The meeting began in public session at 10:10am.

The Chairperson expressed the Committee's thanks to Mr Simon Hamilton MLA for his work as Deputy Chairperson and welcomed Ms Pam Brown MLA into her new role as Deputy Chairperson.

1. Apologies

Apologies were indicated as above.

2. Minutes

The minutes from the meeting of 4th July 2013 were agreed.

Mr Elliott joined the meeting at 10:12am.

3. Chairperson's Business

The Chairperson referred members to correspondence she had received from the Future of the Mourne Area Group asking to brief the Committee in relation to National Parks.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department for an update on National Parks and give further consideration to this issue as part of its planning day.

The Chairperson advised members of her recent meeting with the new Minister who has offered to brief the Committee at its meeting on 24 October.

Agreed: The Committee was content to add this briefing to its Forward Work Programme.

The Chairperson referred to the Committee's recent visit to Rathlin Island and commented how useful it had been.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to thank the representatives from the Marine Task Force and the RSPB for facilitating the visit.

Mr Weir joined the meeting at 10:22am.

The Chairperson indicated to members the importance of logging into their Sky-Drive account in advance of the implementation of electronic packs for Members.

The Chairperson reminded members of the arrangements for the upcoming Committee day in Derry/Londonderry.

4. Matters Arising

4.1 The Committee noted a Departmental reply regarding the remit of the Lough Neagh Working Group.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to give further consideration to this issue at its planning day.

4.2 The Committee noted responses from the PSNI and NI Ambulance regarding collision statistics.

4.3 The Committee noted a Departmental reply regarding the June Monitoring Round.

4.4 The Committee considered Departmental responses regarding the possible closure of the Driver & Vehicle Agency in Northern Ireland.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to forward these responses to the original correspondent and to invite DFT officials to brief the Committee on this issue.

4.5 The Committee noted a Departmental reply regarding NILGA's briefing paper on Waste Management.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to forward the Department's response to NILGA for their information.

4.6 The Committee considered a letter from the Association of Local Authority Chief Executives (NI) regarding the Statutory Transition Committee Regulations.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to forward the correspondence to the Department for comment. The Committee also agreed to ask the Department for details of the difficulties they have experienced with the implementation of the guidance and clarify the legal basis of the guidance.

Lord Morrow left the meeting at 10:42am.

4.7 The Committee noted Departmental Guidance for the Establishment of Statutory Transition Committees.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department to ask if a timescale is available for further guidance being issued.

4.8 The Committee noted a Departmental reply regarding disused quarries.

Agreed: the Committee agreed to give further consideration to this issue at its planning day.

4.9 The Committee noted a Departmental letter regarding a Freshwater Summit to be held on 25 September.

4.10 The Committee noted a Departmental reply regarding the Local Government Reorganisation Bill timetable.

4.11 The Committee considered a Departmental reply regarding an amendment to electoral law.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department to ask to be kept informed on this issue and also to express its disappointment at the lack of response it has received from the Secretary of State.

4.12 The Committee noted a Departmental update on River Basin Management Plans.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department to ask for details of any work carried out in relation to run off from the spread of nutrients on farm land into Lough Neagh.

5. Consultation on Taxi Driver and Periodic Training

Agreed: The Committee was content to request a copy of the synopsis of responses and also requested an indication from the Department of the number of responses received and if they are supportive of the proposals.

Mr. Weir left the meeting at 10:56am.

6. Consultation on the Waste Prevention Programme for Northern Ireland

Agreed: The Committee was content to request a copy of the synopsis of responses and also agreed to ask the Department if funding is available to groups that promote reuse such as Men's Shed.

Lord Morrow rejoined the meeting at 10:57am.

Mr. Elliott left the meeting at 10:58am.

Mr Weir rejoined the meeting at 10.59 am.

7. Consultation on Landfill Restrictions on Food Waste

Agreed: The Committee was content to request a copy of the synopsis of responses.

8. Shellfish Waters Directive – consultation on 2012 review and protection beyond 2013 – synopsis of responses

Agreed: The Committee requested a Departmental briefing on the issues raised in the synopsis and how the Department intends to engage with stakeholders.

9. Consultation on Transfrontier Shipment of Waste (Amendment) Regulations 2013 – synopsis of responses

Agreed: The Committee was content to note the synopsis of responses and also agreed to forward the Department's correspondence to ReGen for information.

Mr. Elliott rejoined the meeting at 11:09am.

10. Consultation on the content of an Environmental Better Regulation Bill - synopsis of responses

Agreed: The Committee was content to note the synopsis of responses.

11. SR 2013/183 Local Government Severance Payments to Councillors Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2013

Lord Morrow left the meeting at 11.12 am.

Question put and agreed: 'The Committee for the Environment has considered SR 2013/183 - Local Government (Severance Payments to Councillors) Regulations NI 2013 and has no objection to the Rule.'

The Chairperson wished to have it recorded that she did not support these Regulations.

12. SR 2013/196 The Road Traffic (Fixed Penalty) (Offences) (Amendment No. 2) Order (Northern Ireland) 2013

Question put and agreed: 'The Committee for the Environment has considered SR 2013/196 – The Road Traffic (Fixed Penalty) (Offences) (Amendment No 2) Order (NI) 2013 and has no objection to the Rule.'

Mr Elliott left the meeting at 11:15am.

13. SR 2013/197 The Road Traffic (Fixed Penalty) (Amendment No. 2) Order (Northern Ireland) 2013

Question put and agreed: 'The Committee for the Environment has considered SR 2013/197 – The Road Traffic (Fixed Penalty) (Amendment No 2) Order (NI) 2013 and has no objection to the Rule.'

14. SR 2013/198 The Smoke Control Areas (Exempted Fireplaces) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2013

Question put and agreed: 'The Committee for the Environment has considered SR 2013/198 – The Smoke Control Areas (Exempted Fireplaces) Regulations (NI) 2013 and has no objection to the Rule.'

15. SR 2013/205 The Smoke Control Areas (Authorised Fuels) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2013

Question put and agreed: 'The Committee for the Environment has considered SR 2013/205 - The Smoke Control Areas (Authorised Fuels) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2013 and has no objection to the Rule.'

16. SR 2013/210 The Planning (General Development) (Amendment No. 2) Order (Northern Ireland) 2013

Question put and agreed: That the Committee for the Environment has considered 'SR 2013/210 - The Planning (General Development) (Amendment No.2) Order (Northern Ireland) 2013 and has no objection to the Rule.

17. SR 2013/217 The Motor Vehicle Testing (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2013

Question put and agreed: 'The Committee for the Environment has considered SR 2013/217 - The Motor Vehicle Testing (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2013 and has no objection to the Rule, subject to the next report from the Examiner of Statutory Rules.'

18. SR 2013/218 The Goods Vehicle (Testing) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2013

Question put and agreed: 'The Committee for the Environment has considered SR 2013/218 - The Goods Vehicles (Testing) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2013 and has no objection to the Rule, subject to the next report from the Examiner of Statutory Rules.'

19. Consideration of submissions to call for evidence on the Carrier Bags Bill

The Committee considered written submissions received in response to its call for evidence on the Carrier Bags Bill.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to invite NILGA, NI Retail Consortium, NIIRTA and NIEL to give oral briefings at its meeting on 26th September.

Ms Brown left the meeting at 11:24am

20. Briefing by Northern Ireland Renewables Industry Group on wind energy

Gary Connolly (NIRIG Chairperson), Meabh Cormacain (NIRIG Policy Officer), Gail Hitchins (Principal Acoustic Consultant, SKM Enviros) and Lucy Whitford (Vice-chair, NIRIG) briefed the Committee in relation to wind energy.

Ms. Brown rejoined the meeting at 11:31am.

Mr. Elliott rejoined the meeting at 11:52am.

Mrs. Kelly joined the meeting at 12:07pm.

The main areas of discussion were the benefits of wind energy, the concerns over the number of turbines and planning applications specifically in the West Tyrone area and the community benefits and interaction with NIRIG.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to NIRIG asking for further information in relation to the impact on tourism; the contribution of wind energy to the price of electricity; details of who had rejected local government proposals to legislate for specific separation distances in relation to turbines in England; and further information on the 'Embrace the Wind' campaign.

The Committee also agreed to forward correspondence received from residents groups to NIRIG for comment.

The Committee agreed to forward a response from the Strabane/ Omagh Council Wind Energy Working Group letter to the Department for comment.

The Committee also agreed to request information from Assembly Research on the separation distances for turbines from properties in Scotland.

21. Departmental briefing on the Public Service Pensions Bill

Marie Cochrane (Local Government Policy Division) and Patrick Smith (Local Government Policy Division) briefed the Committee in relation to the Public Service Pensions Bill.

A question and answer session followed this briefing.

22. Correspondence

The Committee considered a letter from William McCausland (fonacab) and Stephen McCausland (Value Cab) requesting to brief the Committee regarding the Minister's decision to delay the implementation of Single Tier Licensing until September 2014.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that it would consider receiving a briefing when subordinate legislation in respect of the Taxis Act was referred to it.

The Committee considered a Departmental response to correspondence from the River Faughan Anglers regarding a North West Waste Management Facility.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to forward the response to the River Faughan Anglers for their information.

The Committee noted an invitation to the Chairperson from the Construction Employers Federation to attend the 'Construction Excellence Awards'.

The Committee considered a letter from the Department advising of a visit by Lord Deben, the chairman of the Committee on Climate Change.

Agreed: Members agreed to hold a briefing with Lord Deben at its meeting scheduled for 5th December.

The Committee noted the following correspondence:

Copy of Departmental Saving Delivery Plans up to 31 March 2013.

Departmental update on the implementation of action measures contained in the Road Safety Strategy 2020.

Letter from the Minister regarding Archaeological Archives.

Departmental compliance update on George Best Belfast City Airport.

DOE Invest Strategy for Northern Ireland – July and August reports.

Drinking Water Inspectorate's (DWI) annual report for 2012.

Departmental update on Post Project Evaluations.

Departmental update on the implementation of recommendations from the Waste Infrastructure Programme Gateway Review.

Copy of the Ministers response to the Social Development Committee's call for evidence on the Licensing of Pavement Cafes Bill.

Departmental reply regarding Financial Forecasting 2013.

Copy of Departmental response to the HSSPS Committee regarding suicide prevention strategies.

Departmental updates on Enforcement Action.

The Consumer Council Report “Power to Switch”.

DVA Annual Report and Accounts year end 31 March 2013.

Correspondence from the USPC regarding National Parks.

Departmental response regarding enforcement cases in planning.

Departmental letter regarding the Committee on Climate Change progress report on meeting carbon budgets 2013.

Departmental letter informing the Committee of the publication of draft ‘Living Places’ – an Urban Stewardship and Design Guide for NI for public consultation.

Letter regarding the Equality Commission Annual Progress Report 2012/13.

Copy of Correspondence from Mr. James Martin to Nigel Dodds MP regarding the ‘Peace Encampment’ at Twaddell Avenue, Belfast.

Copy of Correspondence forwarded to the Department by the Education Committee regarding the DVA Heavy Goods Vehicle, Bus and Taxi Compliance Survey 2012/13.

Correspondence from the Ringhaddy Area Residents group regarding the shoreline and environs of Strangford Lough.

Departmental reply regarding the complaint on behalf of the Strangford Lough Fishermen’s Association regarding the management of Strangford Lough.

23. Forward Work Programme

The Committee noted the Forward Work Programme.

24. Any Other Business

The Committee gave further discussion to concerns regarding Statutory Transition Committees (STCs).

Agreed: The Committee agreed to contact Councils to ask for details of the make-up of party representation on each STC, and the party make up of councils to which they relate; the principles used for appointing the STCs; and what funding is provided to them and, to date, how has this funding been spent.

25. Date, time and place of next meeting

The next meeting will be held on Thursday 19th September 2013 at 10:00am in Oxford Island Nature Reserve, Craigavon.

The Chairperson adjourned the meeting at 12:42pm.

Anna Lo, MLA
Chairperson, Committee for the Environment
19th September 2013