



**Northern Ireland
Assembly**

COMMITTEE FOR THE ENVIRONMENT

MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS

THURSDAY, 17 OCTOBER 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
Mr Barry McElduff MLA
Mr Ian Milne 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 Alban Maginness MLA
Mr Ian McCrea MLA
Lord Morrow MLA

The meeting began in public session at 10:13am.

1. Apologies

Apologies were as indicated above.

2. Chairperson's Business

The Chairperson referred members to a recent news article in the Belfast Telegraph regarding the procurement of waste management in Northern Ireland.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to raise this issue with the Minister during his briefing on 24th October.

3. Minutes

The minutes from the meeting of 10th October 2013 were agreed.

4. Matters Arising

- 4.1 The Committee noted a Departmental reply regarding the second cycle of River Basin Management Plans
- 4.2 The Committee noted further information from the Department on its October Monitoring Round submission.
- 4.3 The Committee noted correspondence from Central Committee Office confirming that members' attendance figures at Committee meetings would be published on the Assembly website during the week commencing 21 October 2013.

5. Controlled Waste (Seizure of Property) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2013 - Synopsis of Responses

The Committee considered a synopsis of responses on proposed regulations governing the seizure of items relating to illegal waste activity.

Agreed: The Committee was content for the Department to proceed in making the Regulations.

Mr McElduff joined the meeting at 10:29am

Mr Milne joined the meeting at 10:29am

Mr Weir left the meeting at 10:30am

6. Consultation on Draft Guidance on selection and designation of Marine Conservation Zones (MCZs) in the Northern Ireland Inshore Region

The Committee considered notification from the Department that it intends to consult stakeholders on draft guidance on the selection and designation of MCZs. The Department also invited Committee members to the first stakeholder workshop scheduled to be held on 7 November 2013.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to request briefings from the Department to ascertain how the consultation process will roll out and again when the synopsis of responses is completed.

Agreed: The Committee also expressed its disappointment that the date of the first stakeholder event again clashes with the weekly Committee meeting, and agreed to write to the Department requesting a list of other available workshop dates.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department for an update on the Marine Plan.

Mr Weir re-joined the meeting at 10:36am

7. Initial clause by clause consideration of the Carrier Bags Bill

Mr McElduff left the meeting at 11:05am

Departmental officials, Donald Starritt (Head of Policy and Legislation Team), Simon Webb (Project Manager, Carrier Bag Levy) and Jennifer McCay (Policy and Legislation Team), briefed the Committee on the significant aspects of the regulations which will accompany the Bill.

The Committee also considered the key issues of the Bill as they were reflected in each clause.

Clause 1: Extension of the 2008 Act to carrier bags

Agreed: The Committee agreed to request the Department to consider an amendment specifying the date on which the regulations pertaining to the Bill will be implemented

Agreed: The Committee also agreed to request the Department to provide statistical information on the sales of carrier bags in Wales as soon as this is available

Clause 2: Regulations under Schedule 6 to the 2008 Act

Mr Boylan left the meeting at 11.40am.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that it was content with the Department's explanation of the key issues surrounding this clause.

Clause 3: Requirements to charge

Agreed: The Committee agreed that it was content with the Department's explanation of the key issues surrounding this clause.

Clause 4: Sellers

Agreed: The Committee agreed that it was content with the Department's explanation of the key issues surrounding this clause.

Clause 5: Payment of the charge

Mr Boylan rejoined the meeting at 11.45 am.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that it was content with the Department's explanation of the key issues surrounding this clause.

Clause 6: Carrier bags defined by price

Mr McElduff rejoined the meeting at 11:52am

Agreed: The Committee agreed to examine a range of carrier bags, including reusable bags-for-life, to ascertain which bags would be impacted by the price threshold to be introduced by this clause.

Clause 7: Records and enforcement

Agreed: The Committee agreed that it was content with the Department's explanation of the key issues surrounding this clause.

Clause 8: Civil sanctions

Agreed: The Committee agreed that it was content with the Department's explanation of the key issues surrounding this clause.

Clause 9: Review

Agreed: The Committee agreed to request the Department for details of the proposed amendment to provide for an ad hoc review of exemptions.

Mr McElduff left the meeting at 12:02pm

Clause 10: Short title

Agreed: The Committee agreed that it was content with the Department's explanation of this clause.

The Committee discussed the amount of information still to be received from previous witnesses and from the Department.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to continue its scrutiny of the key issues at its meeting on 7 November when it hopes to be able to consider all outstanding information.

Ms Brown left the meeting at 12:05pm

8. NIPSA Briefing on the future of Exploris

Allison Millar (Deputy General Secretary), Antoinette McMillen (NIPSA) and Judith Caldwell (NIPSA), together with Cathie McKimm (Friends of Exploris), briefed the Committee in relation to the future of the Exploris Aquarium and Seal Sanctuary.

Ms Brown re-joined the meeting at 12:11pm

The main areas discussed were the need for immediate and sustained funding for Exploris, the impact on the Portaferry area should the facility close and the potential of the Exploris facility should it remain open.

Mr McElduff re-joined the meeting at 12:53pm

Agreed: The Committee agreed to request an update at the Ministerial briefing scheduled for 24th October.

Agreed: The Committee also agreed to keep the Education and Employment and Learning Committees advised of progress on this issue.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to request a copy of the Ards Borough Council presentation to be given at next week's additional ETI Committee meeting, and to advise of members attendance at that meeting.

9. Consideration of evidence for the review into wind energy

Agreed: The Committee agreed to defer the briefing from Assembly Research until its next meeting scheduled for 24th October.

10. Correspondence

The Committee considered correspondence from the Clerk of the House of Lords EU Sub-Committee on Agriculture, Fisheries, Environment & Energy regarding the Proposal for a Directive of the European Parliament and of the Council establishing a framework for maritime spatial planning and integrated coastal management.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to forward the correspondence to the Department and ask for an update on its engagement with the EU process.

The Committee considered a copy of the Barroso Task Force Desk Officers' report.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to ask the Department for sight of the Commission's work plans as mentioned in the progress report.

The Committee considered correspondence from the Education Committee regarding Exploris.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to keep the Education Committee advised of any further relevant developments on this issue.

The Committee noted the following correspondence:

Copy of Article 31 planning decision to approve mixed use development at Monagh by-pass, Belfast.

Invitation to the UK Office of the European Parliament event reflecting on forty years of EU membership.

11. Forward Work Programme

The Committee noted the Forward Work Programme.

12. Any other business

No other business was discussed.

13. Date, time and place of next meeting

The next meeting will be held on Thursday 24th October 2013 at 10:00am in the Senate Chamber, Parliament Buildings.

The Chairperson adjourned the meeting at 13:21pm

Anna Lo, MLA
Chairperson, Committee for the Environment
24 October 2013