



**Northern Ireland
Assembly**

COMMITTEE FOR THE ENVIRONMENT

MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS

**ANNALOISTE ROOM, LOUGH NEAGH DISCOVERY AND CONFERENCE
CENTRE**

THURSDAY 19 SEPTEMBER 2013,

- 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 McCrea MLA
Mr Ian Milne MLA
Lord Morrow 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 Peter Weir MLA

The meeting began in closed session at 10:18am.

The Deputy Chairperson, Ms Pam Brown, chaired the meeting.

Mr Ian McCrea was welcomed to the Committee by the Deputy Chairperson.

1. Apologies

Apologies were indicated as above.

2. Minutes

The minutes from the meeting of 12th September 2013 were agreed.

3. Committee Priorities 2013-14

The Committee reviewed its activities for the previous year.

The Chairperson joined the meeting at 10.25 am and assumed the chair.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to publish its end of session report on the Assembly website. The Committee also agreed the following actions:

- *That the Committee found its past stakeholder engagement to be positive and worth consideration as an intrinsic element of its future scrutiny*
- *That the Committee should carry out an evaluation of the effectiveness of previous legislation (particularly the High Hedges Act); and that this should include an assessment of the level of implementation by Councils and the level of awareness among officials.*
- *That the Department should provide details of any post-legislative evaluations that it has carried out.*

The Committee discussed its priorities for the 2013-14 session in the following areas:

- Departmental budgets and area plans;

Agreed: The Committee agreed the following objectives and outcome for this area of its work:

Strategic objectives

To enable the Committee to monitor the Department's success in meeting targets – both financial (Budget/Savings Delivery) and service delivery (Programme for Government) as set out by the Executive.

Outcome

The Committee will be fully aware on an on-going basis of the Department's position and progress; this awareness will also inform the Committee's wider scrutiny of all policy areas.

Agreed: The Committee also agreed the following actions:

- *That the Department should provide sufficiently detailed information to enable the Committee to fully understand its budgetary information*
- *That the Department should indicate its overall budget priorities and how these are being reflected in monitoring rounds*
- *That an informal briefing from Departmental officials on budgetary processes is arranged*
- *That the EC Director General is asked to brief the Committee on EU funding*
- *That EU Desk Officer provides information on the availability of current relevant EU funding and how this funding can be drawn down*

- Primary legislation;

Agreed: The Committee agreed the following objectives and outcome for this area of its work:

Strategic objectives

To ensure that the Committee scrutinizes primary legislation in detail, taking into account stakeholder and departmental evidence.

Outcome

To ensure that the Committee will be able to set out its views on the Bill in its report to the Assembly, and propose amendments if appropriate. The Committee will also be in an informed position to carry out post-legislative scrutiny and to review the implementation of legislation, including the scrutiny of Regulations.

Agreed: The Committee also agreed the following actions:

- *That the Department should provide details of any related secondary legislation during the Committee scrutiny of primary legislation*
- *That a stakeholder event is held for Committee Stage of the Local Government Bill*
- *That an evaluation sheet is prepared for the stakeholder event on the Local Government Bill*
- *That more information is provided on the powers and role of the Local Government Auditor*

- Subordinate legislation;

Agreed: The Committee agreed the following objectives and outcome for this area of its work:

Strategic objectives

To ensure that the Committee properly scrutinizes the policy content of all secondary legislation referred to it, and, if appropriate, to recommend to the Assembly how it should proceed.

Outcome

The Committee uses the opportunity afforded to it at SL1 stage to have input into the policy content of the Statutory Rule so that it is content with the Rule laid; OR that the Committee is sufficiently well-informed about the policy content of the Rule to pray/vote against it.

Agreed: The Committee also agreed the following actions:

- *That the Department is asked to provide information in relation to subordinate legislation further in advance, particularly with EU related legislation*

- Inquiries

Agreed: The Committee agreed the following objectives and outcome for this area of its work:

Strategic objectives

To inquire further into a single issue which has given rise to Committee's concerns, and to take sufficient evidence of all types to enable the Committee to report on that issue.

Outcome

The Committee will determine Terms of Reference, and will come to conclusions and make recommendations based on the evidence it has taken, and will include these in its report.

Agreed: The Committee also agreed the following actions:

- *That the Committee holds an inquiry into water quality in Lough Neagh which is to examine contributory factors and how they can be addressed. Terms of Reference are to be brought back for agreement*
- *That the Committee holds a Review into wind energy, focusing on the cumulative impact of wind farms and the effectiveness of PPS 18*

Mr Elliott left the meeting at 11:45am.

- Engagement

Agreed: The Committee agreed the following objectives and outcome for this area of its work:

Strategic objectives

To enable the Committee to interact with stakeholders – both individuals and organisations – to add a wider perspective and greater depth to its scrutiny.

Outcome

The Committee will challenge the Department more effectively and will have a more informed basis for input into the formulation of policy and legislation.

Agreed: The Committee also agreed the following actions:

- *That any informal stakeholder meetings are to be held on a Thursday afternoon*
- *That Departmental oral briefings are arranged on the following issues, on suitable dates on the Committee's Forward Work Programme:*
 - *Spot checks on goods vehicles*
 - *The consumption of alcohol on PSVs*
 - *Supplementary Planning Guidance on Anaerobic digestion*
 - *DVA compliance survey on taxis/buses/HGVs*
 - *Responses to consultation on the Shellfish Waters Directive*
 - *That a visit, to include an external meeting is arranged at the South Eastern Regional College environmental centre*

- *That a visit to a QPANI quarry site should be arranged when the relevant legislation is introduced*

- *That the following changes are made to the regular Departmental updates:*
 - *DVA pass/fail rates – changed to annual update*
 - *Strategic Waste Infrastructure - changed to annual update*
 - *Planning enforcement – changed to 6 monthly update*
 - *River Basin Management Plans - changed to annual update*
 - *That Departmental updates on Article 31 applications should remain on a quarterly basis*

- *That the Committee would welcome holding joint meetings with other Committees on mutually relevant subjects*

- **Committee Forward Work Programme.**
Agreed: The Committee noted the draft Forward Work Programme and the Departmental Work Programme. The Committee also agreed that cover notes, along with suggested lines of questioning, should be provided for appropriate oral briefings.

4. Date, time and place of next meeting

The next meeting will be held on Thursday 26th September 2013 at 10:00am in the Senate Chamber, Parliament Buildings.

The Chairperson adjourned the meeting at 12:34 pm.

Anna Lo, MLA
Chairperson, Committee for the Environment
26th September 2013