



**Northern Ireland
Assembly**

COMMITTEE FOR THE ENVIRONMENT

MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS

THURSDAY, 21 MAY 2015

SENATE CHAMBER, PARLIAMENT BUILDINGS

Present: Ms Anna Lo MLA (Chairperson)
Mrs Pam Cameron MLA (Deputy Chairperson)
Mr Cathal Boylan MLA
Mr Colum Eastwood MLA
Mr Alban Maginness MLA
Mr Ian McCrea MLA
Mr Gary Middleton MLA
Mr Ian Milne MLA
Mrs Sandra Overend MLA

In Attendance: Miss Ciara McKay (Assembly Clerk)
Mr Mark McQuade (Assistant Clerk)
Mr Neil Sedgewick (Clerical Supervisor)
Miss Allison Ferguson (Clerical Officer)

Apologies: Mr Barry McElduff MLA
Lord Morrow MLA

The meeting began at 10.05am in public session.

The Chairperson welcomed Mr Gary Middleton to the Committee.

Mr Milne joined the meeting at 10.06am.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to Mr Peter Weir to thank him for his contribution to the Committee.

1. Apologies

The apologies are noted above.

2. Chairs Business

The Chairperson reminded members that the Committee would be participating in a panel discussion following its meeting on Thursday 18 June at the NILGA conference.

The Committee noted an invitation from Northern Ireland Environment Link to a Seminar on Engaging Heritage with Community Planning.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that the Assembly Researcher would attend the seminar on the Committee's behalf and prepare a report for members on issues raised.

Mr McCrea joined the meeting at 10.10am.

The Committee discussed media reports on sand extraction on Lough Neagh.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department for further information on this matter.

The Committee discussed a report from the Criminal Justice Inspection Northern Ireland on the Northern Ireland Environment Agency Environmental Crime Unit.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to invite the Criminal Justice Inspection Northern Ireland to brief it on the report's findings and recommendations.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to invite the Department to brief it on its response to the findings and recommendations of the report.

3. Minutes

The minutes from the meeting held on 30th April 2015 were agreed.

4. Matters arising

The Committee noted a response from the Department regarding infraction proceedings under the Urban Waste Water Treatment Directive in connection with Ballycastle Waste Water Treatment Works.

The Committee noted a response from the Department regarding noise pollution from Wind Farms.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to forward the response to West Tyrone Against Wind Farms who raised this matter with it.

The Committee noted correspondence from the Department regarding a consultation on the draft Waste Management Licensing (Amendment) Regulations (NI) 2015.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to revisit this correspondence at the next meeting, when it will consider the synopsis of consultation responses.

The Committee noted a response from the Department regarding planning policy for large scale solar energy development.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to forward the response to KellsVOCAL who raised this matter with it.

The Committee noted a response from the Department regarding issues raised by the Six Mile Water Trust about development on the Six Mile Water River.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to forward correspondence from the Six Mile Water Trust to Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Council which has responsibility for planning applications in this area.

The Committee noted a response from the Department regarding pollution incidents on Six Mile Water.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department for further information, including the measures the Department is taking to reduce the number of pollution incidents.

The Committee noted a response from the Department regarding Conservation (Natural Habitats ETC) Regulations (NI) 2015.

The Committee noted correspondence from the Department regarding the Taxis (2008 Act) (Commencement No. 4) (Amendment) Order (NI) 2015.

The Committee noted a response from the Department for Regional Development regarding wheelchair accessible taxis at taxi ranks.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department for Regional Development suggesting that it liaise with Disability Action on this matter. The Committee also agreed to forward this correspondence to Disability Action, IMTAC and DOE.

The Committee noted correspondence from IMTAC regarding the retention of kerbed separation between the footway and carriageway.

5. Departmental briefing on the Road Traffic (Amendment) Bill.

The Committee was briefed on the proposed amendments to the Bill:

Mr Donald Starritt Road User Behaviours Policy & Strategy Branch

Ms Nicola McEvoy Road Safety, Department of the Environment

Mrs Cameron joined the meeting at 10.43am.

The Committee noted the proposed amendments, as it had already published its report on its consideration during the Committee Stage of the Bill.

6. Departmental briefing on the Food Waste Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015

The Committee noted a response from the Department on the implementation of the Food Waste Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015.

The Committee noted responses from Councils on their recycling policies.

Mr Eastwood joined the meeting at 10.51am.

The Committee was briefed by:

Mr Mark Livingstone Northern Ireland Environment Agency

Mr William Dukelow Waste Strategy Branch

Agreed: Officials agreed to provide to the Committee a copy of the 2010 WRAP Report.

7. Draft Statutory Rule: The Planning (Amount of Fixed Penalty) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015

Question put and agreed:

'The Committee for the Environment has considered The Planning (Amount of Fixed Penalty) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015 and, subject to the report of the Examiner of Statutory Rules, recommends that the Rule is affirmed by the Assembly.'

8. SR2015/238 – The Hazardous Waste (Amendment) Regulations (NI) 2015

Question put and agreed:

'The Committee for the Environment has considered SR2015/238, the Hazardous Waste (Amendment) Regulations (NI) 2015 and, subject to the report of the Examiner of Statutory Rules, is content with the rule.'

9. SR 2015/242 - The Motor Vehicles (Driving Licences) (Amendment No 2) Regulations (NI) 2015

Question put and agreed:

'The Committee for the Environment has considered SR 2015/242, the Motor Vehicles (Driving Licences) (Amendment No 2) Regulations (NI) 2015 and, subject to the report of the Examiner of Statutory Rules, is content with the rule.'

10. Briefing from the Woodland Trust on a register of trees of national special interest for Northern Ireland.

The Committee was briefed on proposals to create on a register of trees of national special interest for Northern Ireland by:

Mr Patrick Cregg

Director, Woodland Trust

Ms Lorraine Mullally

Government Affairs Officer, Woodland Trust

Mr McCrea left the meeting at 11.37am.

Mr Maginness left the meeting at 11.56am.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to forward the briefing paper provided by the Woodland Trust to the Department; and to ask the Department to consider taking the proposals for a register of trees of national special interest forward.

11. Correspondence relating to the Department of the Environment Budget Reductions.

Mr McCrea rejoined the meeting at 12.05pm.

The Committee noted a report on an informal meeting with Environmental Non-Government Organisations and the Centre of Archaeological Fieldwork at Queens on the reduction in funding for environmental groups.

The Committee noted correspondence from Queen's University regarding the non-renewal of the Northern Ireland Environment Agency's contract with Quercus for the Natural Heritage Research Partnership.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Minister on the issues raised in the report and in the correspondence.

12. Correspondence.

Mr McCrea left the meeting at 12.08pm.

The Committee noted a statement by the Minister on North South Ministerial Council meeting held in Transport Sectoral Format.

The Committee noted correspondence from the Ad Hoc Committee on the Northern Ireland Public Services Ombudsperson (NIPSO) Bill.

The following members made a declaration of their membership of the Ad hoc Committee considering the NIPSO Bill: Mr Cathal Boylan; Mr Colum Eastwood; Mr Gary Middleton.

The Committee noted a letter from The Speaker regarding a public petition.

The Committee noted an update from the Department on the George Best City Airport Planning Agreement.

The Committee noted correspondence from the Committee for Enterprise, Trade and Investment to the Department regarding its Inquiry into Growing the Economy and Creating Jobs in Reduced Tax Environment.

The Committee noted correspondence from the Committee for Finance and Personnel regarding monitoring departmental Savings Delivery Plans for 2014/15.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to forward the correspondence to the Department seeking its comments on the correspondence.

The Committee noted correspondence from Angling Classics regarding development on the banks of the Six Mile Water.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to forward the correspondence to Antrim & Newtownabbey Borough Council which has responsibility for planning applications in this area.

The Committee noted correspondence from the EU Affairs Manager regarding the award through Horizon 2020 to a company regarding the recycling of tyres.

The Committee noted correspondence from the Department regarding a public consultation on the draft Local Government Pension Scheme (Amendment No. 3) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015.

The Committee noted correspondence from the No Creevy Quarry Group requesting to brief the Committee on mineral planning policy in Northern Ireland.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the group seeking a written briefing paper.

13. Forward Work Programme

The Committee considered its Forward Work Programme.

Agreed: The Committee agreed its Forward Work Programme to July 2015.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to hold an additional meeting on Tuesday 2nd June to take evidence on June Monitoring.

The Committee noted a draft programme for its visit to the Belfast Lough Marine Conservation Zone.

Mr Maginness rejoined the meeting at 12.15pm.

14. Any Other Business

No other business was discussed.

15. Date, Time and Place of next meeting

The Committee agreed that its next meeting will be held at 12.45pm on Tuesday 2nd June 2015 in the Senate Chamber, Parliament Buildings.

The Chairperson adjourned the meeting at 12.16pm.

Anna Lo, MLA

Chairperson, Committee for the Environment

4 June 2015