



**Northern Ireland  
Assembly**

**COMMITTEE FOR THE ENVIRONMENT**

**DRAFT MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS**

**THURSDAY, 18 SEPTEMBER 2014**

**LOUGH NEAGH DISCOVERY CENTRE**

- Present: Ms Anna Lo MLA (Chairperson)  
Mrs Pam Cameron MLA (Deputy Chairperson)  
Mr Cathal Boylan MLA  
Mr Ian McCrea MLA  
Mr Ian Milne MLA  
Lord Morrow MLA  
Mrs Sandra Overend MLA  
Mr Peter Weir MLA
- In Attendance: Ms Sheila Mawhinney (Assembly Clerk)  
Mr Mark McQuade (Assistant Assembly Clerk)  
Mr Neil Sedgewick (Clerical Supervisor)  
Ms Allison Ferguson (Clerical Officer)  
Ms Suzie Cave (Assembly Research & Information Service)
- Apologies: Mr Barry McElduff MLA  
Mr Alban Maginness MLA

*The meeting began in closed session at 10:12.*

**1. Apologies**

Apologies were indicated as above.

**2. Review of previous year /overview.**

The Committee reviewed its activities for the previous year, and discussed its priorities for the 2014/15 session.

*Mr Boylan joined the meeting at 10:19am.*

*Agreed: The Committee was content that its End of Session report accurately reflected its activities during the previous session and agreed that this report should be published on the Assembly website.*

*Agreed: The Committee agreed that it should carry forward the following objectives:*

- *To consider stakeholder engagement as an intrinsic element of its future scrutiny*
- *To 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.*
- *To request the Department to provide details of any post-legislative evaluations that it has carried out.*

*Agreed: The Committee also agreed to write to Councils regarding their involvement in the process of drafting and implementing legislation; and to ask the Department for information on any systems which it has put in place to monitor the impact of legislation.*

*Mr Milne joined the meeting at 10:35am.*

### **3. Strategy/ Policy**

The Committee discussed the main areas of the Department's policies and objectives for the 2014/2015 session.

*Agreed: The Committee agreed that it would focus on the following areas:*

- *The Committee agreed that it would finish taking evidence on 23 October 2014 in relation to its Wind Energy inquiry and that it would move to consideration of the main issues following Halloween recess;*
- *The Committee agreed to visit the site of a proposed Marine Conservation Zone;*
- *The Committee agreed to take evidence from Departmental officials and from relevant stakeholders on the draft Strategic Planning Policy Statement;*
- *The Committee agreed to take oral evidence on 'fracking' for shale gas by scheduling a briefing from Dr Mike Hill;*
- *The Committee agreed to investigate the planning implications of mining for gold and minerals in Northern Ireland, and to schedule a briefing from the Dalradian Resources*

*Mrs Cameron joined the meeting at 11:09am.*

- *The Committee agreed to scrutinise the Department's progress towards 2015 targets for water quality, and to request an update and oral briefing from the Department in the New Year.*

### **4. Budget**

The Committee considered the Department's budgetary plans and reviewed its scrutiny of these.

*The Committee agreed the following objective and outcome for this area of its work:*

*Strategic objective*

*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 to carry forward the following specific objectives:*

- 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; and*
- That the Department should provide updates on its progress towards meeting Programme for Government targets on a regular basis.*

*Mr Weir left the meeting at 11.25am.*

## **5. Primary Legislation**

The Committee discussed its scrutiny of primary legislation.

*The Committee agreed the following objective and outcomes for this area of its work:*

*Strategic objective*

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

*Outcomes*

*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.*

The Committee noted the progress of the Committee stage of the Road Traffic (Amendment) Bill.

The Committee noted the Department's intention to introduce the Environmental Better Regulation Bill to the Assembly in December 2014.

## **6. Subordinate Legislation**

*The Committee agreed the following objective and outcomes for this area of its work:*

### Strategic objective

*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.*

### Outcomes

*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 agreed that it was content with its strategic objectives and outcomes.*

*The Committee noted a Departmental plan of subordinate legislation for September to December 2014.*

*Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department about the timeliness for proposals for subordinate legislation.*

## **7. European Scrutiny**

The Committee discussed the importance of timely and well-informed scrutiny of EU policy proposals.

*Mr McCrea left the meeting at 11.45am.*

*Agreed: The Committee agreed the following actions.*

- to request a research paper on the EC policy areas relevant to DOE*
- to request an oral briefing from the Assembly's EU Liaison Officer*
- to schedule a briefing from Northern Ireland Environment Link outlining the relevant EU environmental work streams and opportunities for influencing policy*
- to invite Northern Ireland MEPs to brief on relevant EU funding streams and forthcoming policy.*

*Mr McCrea rejoined the meeting at 11.52am.*

## **8. Engagement**

The Committee discussed its objectives and outcomes for its engagement with stakeholders, and the effectiveness of its engagement throughout the 2014-2015 session.

*Strategic Objective:*

*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 agreed that it was content to carry forward these strategic objectives and outcomes.*

The Committee also discussed specific areas of stakeholder engagement and agreed the following actions:

- *to hold stakeholder events as required;*
- *to carry out a visit to an Area of Special Scientific Interest and a proposed Marine Conservation Zone;*
- *to take part in a visit organised by ReNew to sites in Belgium and Germany working on research on the recycling of waste; and*
- *to sponsor an event being organised by Northern Ireland Environment Link on 12 January 2015.*

*Agreed: The Committee further agreed to work with other Assembly committees where there is a shared area of interest: specifically with the Committee for Agriculture & Rural Development on water quality; with the Committee for Enterprise, Trade and Investment on grid connection for wind turbines; and with the Committee for Education on Eco Schools, school transport, community planning and the inclusion of environmental awareness in the school curriculum.*

*Agreed: The Committee also agreed to write to the Department to ascertain if it has been monitoring the effectiveness of the current DVA systems.*

## **9. Committee meetings**

*Mrs Overend left the meeting at 12.18pm.*

The Committee discussed the format of Committee meetings.

*Agreed: The Committee agreed that meeting would start at 10am but this would be delayed when necessary to accommodate pre-meetings.*

*Agreed: the Committee agreed that it was content with the sample protocol on the conduct and operation of committee meetings proposed by the Chairpersons' Liaison Group.*

## **10. Forward Work Programme**

The Committee noted its Forward Work Programme.

The Committee noted the Departmental Forward Work Programme.

## **11. Any Other Business**

*Agreed: the Committee agreed to write to the Department to ask for a breakdown of the causes of road traffic deaths and to raise this issue with the PSNI at its next meeting.*

**12. Date, Time and Place of next meeting**

The next meeting will be held Thursday 25<sup>th</sup> September 2014 in the Senate Chamber, Parliament Buildings.

*The Chairperson adjourned the meeting at 12:35.*

**Anna Lo, MLA**

**Chairperson, Committee for the Environment**

**25 September 2014**