

COMMITTEE FOR THE ENVIRONMENT LEGACY REPORT

MEMBERSHIP AND POWERS

The Committee for the Environment is a Statutory Departmental Committee established in accordance with paragraphs 8 and 9 of the Belfast Agreement, section 29 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998 and under Standing Order 48.

The Committee has power to:

- Consider and advise on Departmental budgets and annual plans in the context of the overall budget allocation;
- Consider relevant secondary legislation and take the Committee stage of primary legislation;
- Call for persons and papers;
- Initiate inquiries and make reports; and
- Consider and advise on any matters brought to the Committee by the Minister of the Environment

The Committee has 11 members including a Chairperson and Deputy Chairperson and a quorum of 5. The current membership of the Committee is as follows:

Ms Anna Lo MBE (Chairperson)

Mrs Pam Cameron (Deputy Chairperson)

Mr Cathal Boylan

Mr Paul Girvan

Mr William Irwin

Mr Alban Maginness

Mr Barry McElduff

Mr Patsy McGlone

Mr Ian Milne

Mr Alastair Patterson

Mr George Robinson MBE

A full list of membership throughout the mandate can be found at Appendix 1.

COMMITTEE ACHIEVEMENTS

Scrutiny of Bills

During the mandate, the Committee undertook Clause by Clause scrutiny of 7 Bills, as follows.

Marine Bill – The Committee considered 34 written responses and took evidence from several of these organisations prior to producing its report. The Committee made twelve recommendations, all of which were accepted by the Department and delivered through commitments for action or amendments to the Bill. The Committee was particularly keen to ensure that the legislation would require the Department to take account of existing marine interests before designating Marine Conservation Areas; and that any public authority that failed to comply with its duties is required to provide an explanation in writing. [Committee report on the Marine Bill](#)

Planning Bill - The Committee considered 112 responses to its call for evidence and took oral evidence from several of these organisations prior to producing its report. The Committee report made a number of recommendations, which were accepted by the Department. On 22 October 2013 the Minister made a statement to the Assembly indicating that he would not be moving the Bill to Further Consideration Stage. [Committee report on the Planning Bill](#)

Carrier Bags Bill - The Committee considered 10 responses to its call for evidence. While the Committee was broadly supportive of the Bill, members expressed serious concerns about the proposed commencement date for the new provisions which were intended to be introduced as soon as the Bill received Royal Assent in April 2014. In response to these concerns, the Minister agreed that the Bill should not come into effect before 5 January 2015. The Committee welcomed the Minister's response and agreed that this delay in implementation would allow the Department to raise public awareness of the changes and ensure that retailers were adequately prepared to administer the new scheme. [Committee report on the Carrier Bags Bill](#)

Local Government Bill - The Committee considered 38 responses to its call for evidence on this Bill, which introduced a significant level of reform to the current structure and procedures of local councils. The Committee began its scrutiny of the Bill on 1 October 2013 and took evidence from a range of relevant organisation. This included an engagement event in the Long Gallery to allow stakeholders to put forward their views on key areas of the Bill directly to Committee members. In its report, the Committee made several recommendations and suggested amendments to the Department. Where the Minister did not accept these recommendations, the Committee brought forward its own amendments for Assembly debate and inclusion in the Bill. These amendments were agreed by the Assembly on 18 March 2014.

[Committee report on the Local Government Bill](#)

Road Traffic Amendment Bill – The Committee considered 17 responses to the Bill. It was broadly supportive of the Bill, but expressed concern regarding two provisions: the retention of the “statutory option”, i.e. the right to ask for a blood or urine specimen to replace a breath test if that breath test is marginally over the present prescribed limits; and the introduction of a 12 month minimum learning period for learner drivers, commencing at the earlier age of sixteen and a half. The Committee successfully sought changes to the Bill, as the Department agreed to amend the Bill to reflect the concerns of the Committee. These amendments were agreed by the Assembly on 29th June 2015. [Committee report on the Road Traffic Amendment Bill](#)

Environmental Better Regulation Bill - The Committee considered 14 responses to its call for evidence. The Committee was broadly supportive of the Bill. However as it is a skeleton Bill, the Committee sought agreement from the Department to amend the Bill to: reduce the range of powers given to the Department to further define and modify the definition of “environmental activities”; reflect the purpose of the Bill on the face of the Bill; and ensured that the level of Assembly protection was sufficient. The Assembly agreed the amendments in January 2015. [Committee report on the Environmental Better Regulation Bill](#)

Scrap Metal Dealers Bill - The Committee considered 18 responses to its call for evidence for this Private Members Bill. A number of complex issues were raised during the Committee Stage. That, coupled with the introduction of the Bill so close to the end of the mandate, resulted in the Committee agreeing that it was not content to form a view as it did not have sufficient time to properly scrutinise the clauses or proposed amendments. [Committee report on the Scrap Metal Dealers Bill](#)

Subordinate Legislation

The Committee considered 271 pieces of subordinate legislation during this mandate. These covered a range of issues across the Department's remit, including the following:

Reform of Local Government – The Committee considered a high volume of subordinate legislation to implement the Local Government Bill. April 2015 saw changes to the local government structure, including the transfer of planning functions to 11 new councils. The Committee scrutinised statutory rules to facilitate this transfer, ensuring appropriate checks and balances were in place.

Taxi Reform – The Committee considered subordinate legislation to implement the Taxi Act 2008. The Northern Ireland Assembly endorsed the Committee's recommendation in February 2015 to pray against the Taxi Licensing Regulations (Northern Ireland) and the Taxi Operators Licensing (Amendment) Regulations, to create the balance between more flexibility for consumers while not being disadvantageous to some sectors of the industry. Subsequently, the Committee was instrumental in securing amendments to the Department's proposals for taxi reform, which were agreed by the Committee in January 2016.

Committee's Inquiries

Safe Disposal of Used Tyres - During the mandate the Committee conducted an inquiry into the safe disposal of used tyres. The Committee issued an interim report in April 2012, pending the outcome of an all-island survey of used tyres by the Department. Following receipt of this additional information

and further oral evidence, the Committee reconsidered and revised its amendments. The Department incorporated these recommendations into its Used Tyre Action Plan. [Report on the Committee Inquiry into the Safe Disposal of Used Tyres](#)

Wind Energy - The Committee also conducted an inquiry into Wind Energy, in response to concerns raised by residents who live in close proximity to existing or proposed wind farms. The Committee made 20 recommendations, regarding a strategic approach to planning; planning processes; wind turbine and noise separation distances; and community engagement. The Department has agreed to consider these recommendations further as part of a review of renewable energy policy and guidance. [Report on the Committee Inquiry into Wind Energy](#)

Policy Scrutiny

The Committee's policy scrutiny has mirrored the wide remit of the Department. The Department has consulted extensively on proposed policy changes and the Committee has considered 187 consultations and the responses.

Where appropriate, the Committee received written and oral briefings. In addition to the above, the Committee has scrutinised and advised the Minister on policy issues in relation to the draft Single Planning Policy Statement, road safety, waste management, environmental crime, meeting existing climate change targets and river pollution.

Budget Scrutiny

Throughout the mandate, the Committee has received briefings and updates from the Department on its budgetary position. The Committee has closely scrutinised the Department's proposed monitoring round bids.

Throughout the mandate, the Committee explored the impact that reductions in budget and the voluntary exit scheme would have on the Department's delivery of its priorities; and how the income from the carriers bag levy would be spent. The Committee also called the Minister to attend Committee in March 2015 to account for reductions in funding to the eNGO sector and how

this was notified to the sector. As a result the Minister found additional money to allocate to the sector and, at the Committee's request, entered into a consultation exercise with the sector to ascertain how best this money might be spent. This led to an announcement in May 2016 of a new Natural Environment Fund of £1.25m.

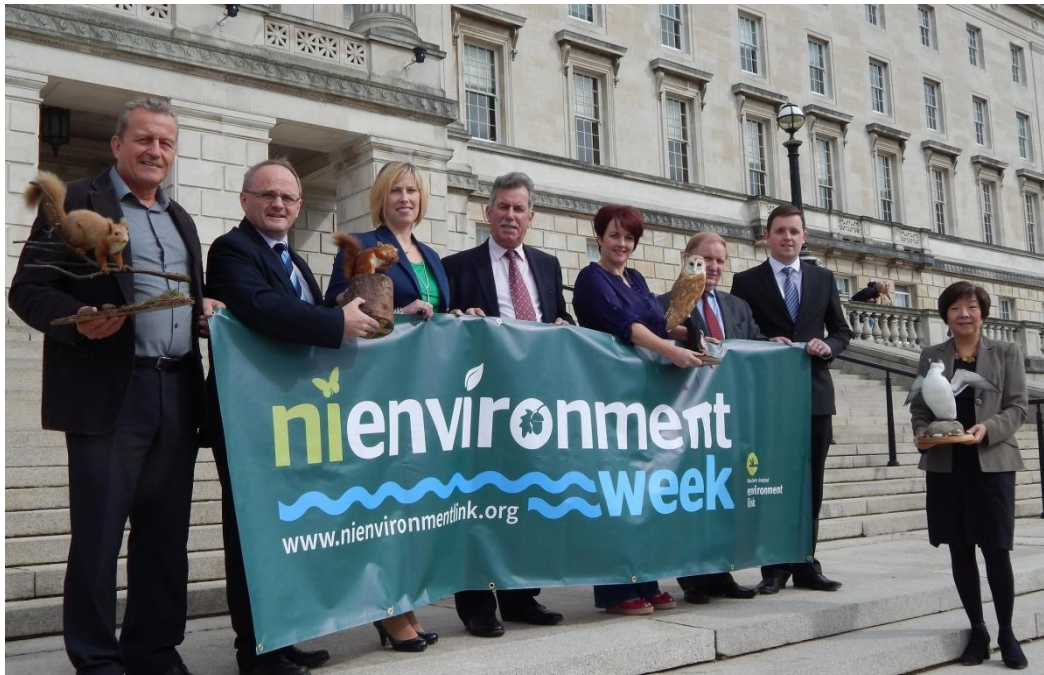
EU Scrutiny

The Committee has kept itself informed of issues arising from the European Commission through regular briefings from the Department, the Assembly's EU Co-ordinator and Assembly research. The Committee agreed its yearly European Priorities based on the European Commission work programme.

The Committee has also scrutinised subordinate legislation that transposes or implements EU Directives. The Committee also liaised directly with the Chairperson of the House of Lords EU Sub Committee dealing with proposals that would radically change MOT testing in Northern Ireland, which would incur significant costs for small businesses with little impact on road deaths. By liaising directly with the EU Sub Committee, the Committee's views were reflected directly within the UK response.

Northern Ireland Environment Week

In September 2015, the Committee for the Environment hosted a number of events in Parliament Buildings as part of the inaugural Northern Ireland Environment Week, which was organised by Northern Ireland Environment Link (NIEL).



Committee members at the launch of Northern Ireland Environment Week 2015

The main aim of Northern Ireland Environment Week is to raise awareness of environmental issues, and provide an opportunity for the environmental NGO sector to engage with MLAs. It is an opportunity to celebrate and to encourage everyone to play their part in preserving, protecting and cherishing the natural and built environment; and to generate discussion to shape future environmental policy.

The week was very successful, and saw the launch of the Species Champion initiative and discussions on social investment for environmental NGO activity; potential benefits of open government network to the environment sector; and a Land Strategy.

COMMITTEE APPROACH TO UNDERTAKING ITS WORK

Events

The Committee has been keen to take on board the views of as many individuals/organisations as possible to inform its decisions. To facilitate this, the Committee held stakeholder events on the following topics:

- Taxi legislation;

- The draft Programme for Government;
- Enabling legislation for national parks;
- The Planning Bill;
- The Local Government Bill;
- Wind Energy;
- The Environmental Better Regulation Bill; and
- River Pollution in Northern Ireland.

Research

During the mandate, members availed of Assembly Research and Library Services on a regular basis, particularly during the Committee Stages of Bills, Committee inquiries and to support evidence based scrutiny of the Departmental budget and policy. Assembly research undertook primary research during the Committee's consideration of the Road Traffic Amendment Bill, so that the Committee had the views of young people who would be directly impacted by the provisions of the Bill.

Research also provided information ahead of the Committee's participation on the panel at NILGA's first Annual Conference following the reform of local government in April 2015.



Committee Chairperson Anna Lo MLA addressing the 2015 NILGA Conference.

Evidence sessions

The Committee was keen to hear oral evidence from as many organisations as possible, particularly during its scrutiny of primary legislation. Public notices calling for written evidence to the Committee Stage of Bills were placed in the 3 main newspapers. The Committee also identified and contacted its key stakeholders directly, seeking written submissions to assist it in its scrutiny role. The Committee considered the information provided and invited organisations to provide oral evidence. This information was instrumental in facilitating the Committee reach an evidence based position.

Visits

During the course of the mandate the Committee undertook 24 visits. The Committee visited Scotland twice, once to study the impact of the Scottish Marine legislation; and again to see the success of Scottish Environment Week.

The Committee also visited Belgium and Germany to investigate an alternative approach to waste, which is refined and reused rather than simply being recycled. [Report on Committee Visit to VITO and Metabolon 14-16 October 2014](#)

Other visits included to Rathlin Island, the Ulster Museum warehouse storing artefacts and Groomsport Harbour, which encompasses Ballymacormick Point Area of Special Scientific Interest, Outer Ards Special Protection Area and the proposed Belfast Lough Marine Conservation Zone.



Committee members on visit to the RSPB Seabird Centre, Rathlin Island

Joint Committee meetings / visits

The Committee engaged with the Oireachtas Joint Committee on Environment, Culture and Gaeltacht in a joint event held in Enniskillen in October 2012, to discuss the difficulties faced in planning issues, impacting on border areas.

The Committee also visited the National Museum of Ireland's Collections Resource Centre at Swords and archaeological excavations at Drumclay Crannog, Fermanagh with the Committee for Culture, Arts and Leisure. This cumulated in a joint motion on the need to close gaps in the policy framework and legislation regarding the excavation of archaeological artefacts from planning led developments.



Committee members along with members of the Committee for Culture, Arts & Leisure visiting Swords Collections Resource Centre, National Museum of Ireland

Use of advisors

As part of its inquiry into Wind Energy the Committee used a specialist advisor to provide it with advice on the issue of wind turbine noise and the current guidelines (ETSU-97).

ISSUES FOR INCOMING COMMITTEES

As part of the Stormont House Agreement it was agreed that the number of departments would reduce from twelve to nine in May 2016. The Department of the Environment will no longer exist and its functions will transfer to three of the new departments namely:

Agriculture, Environment & Rural Affairs

- **DARD** (less Rivers Agency) plus
- Environmental functions from DOE including regulation but excluding 'Built Heritage'.

Infrastructure

- **DRD** plus
- Vehicle regulation, road safety & DVA functions from DOE
- Strategic planning from DOE

Communities

- **DSD** plus
- Local Government from DOE
- Historic Environment - Built Heritage from DOE

The Committee has expressed concern that existing environment functions will not have sufficient hierarchy within a new Department with a larger remit. The Committee recommends that the incoming Committees will continue to prioritise existing environment functions and ensure that adequate scrutiny is undertaken, given the economic and societal benefits of these functions.

ISSUES FOR INCOMING DEPARTMENT FOR AGRICULTURE, ENVIRONMENT AND RURAL AFFAIRS

Climate Change legislation

The Committee considered the outcome of the Minister's discussion paper on proposals for a Northern Ireland Climate Change Bill. An incoming Committee may wish to consider this paper and any subsequent action that may be taken.

Independent Environment Protection Agency

The Committee considered the outcome of the Minister's discussion paper on proposals for an independent Environment Protection Agency. An incoming Committee may wish to consider this paper and any subsequent action that may be taken.

River pollution

The Committee undertook preparatory work on the causes of river pollution, following incidents of fish kill. The Committee did not have enough time in the remaining months of the mandate to undertake a full inquiry into this important issue.

Therefore, it commissioned research and took briefings from the Freshwater Taskforce and Ulster Angling Federation in relation to causes of pollution and recommendations.

The Committee held a stakeholder event on 18th February 2016; and produced a report on the issues that were discussed at this event. A motion was debated on 8th March, calling for the Minister to work with Executive colleagues and key stakeholders to work together to address the issues identified at the stakeholder event.

The purpose was to highlight the issues. An incoming Committee may wish to undertake further work in relation to this area, particularly with regards to the implementation of the Water Framework Directive; how the new department structure might positively impact on the water quality environment; preventative measures to reduce pollution; improved monitoring and enforcement. [Report on River Pollution Stakeholder Event](#)



Discussion group at river pollution stakeholder event

Japanese Knotweed

The Committee commissioned comparative research into the legislation in Northern Ireland, GB and ROI in relation to Japanese knotweed as an invasive species and the control of it spreading to neighbouring properties. The Committee was concerned that there does not appear to be some form of public assistance or redress for individual property owners who have Japanese knotweed spreading onto their properties, particularly where the growth originates from waste ground which is unowned.

The Committee recognises that this is a cross departmental issue; and asked the Minister to raise this matter at the Executive. This prompted the Minister to ask officials to undertake an analysis of the extent of the problem of Japanese knotweed.

An incoming Committee may wish to consider this matter further.

Northern Ireland Environment Week

In anticipation of the restructuring of Departments, Northern Ireland Environment Week was an important milestone to ensure there is a legacy for the protection and preservation of our environment. The Committee believe it is important to establish Northern Ireland Environment Week as an annual event in the Assembly calendar.

An incoming Committee may wish to sponsor/host the second Northern Ireland Environment Week in September 2016.

Dilapidated/Dangerous Buildings and Neglected Sites

At its last meeting on 10th March, the Committee took oral evidence ahead of the publication of a consultation looking at proposals for a new, broader regime to deal with dilapidated and dangerous buildings and neglected sites. The Department intends to consult on a number of proposals including legislative change. An incoming Committee may wish to seek an update in relation to the outcome of this consultation, and the proposed way forward.

NSMC Air Pollution Study

The Committee had sought a briefing from Department officials on the findings from the NSMC Air Pollution Study. However, the report had not been signed off by the Minister before the Committee's final meeting and this briefing did not take place. An incoming Committee may wish to seek an update in relation to the findings of this very important study; and the implications for Northern Ireland.

Waste Infrastructure

The current waste strategy is coming to a close in 2020. NILGA updated the Committee via written briefing at its meeting on 10th March that discussions have resulted in the development of a framework for an action plan, which is currently in draft form. The framework is being designed to include consideration of waste prevention/reduction, recycling, recovery, landfill and what is required to ensure Northern Ireland meets its waste targets for 2020 and beyond.

The incoming Committee may wish to seek an update from local government on the way forward in the new mandate.

EU Issues

The incoming Committee may also wish to ascertain the efforts of the Department in promoting, assisting and securing EU funding for environmental projects, from funding programmes such as Interreg VA.

In January 2016, the Committee agreed that the following issues would have been its European priorities for 16/17. The incoming Committee may wish to consider these as their own European priorities

Priority 1: Maritime Marine Framework

The Northern Ireland Executive is legally responsible for implementation of European Directives within waters and for developing marine plans in both the inshore (0-12 nautical miles) and the offshore (12 nautical miles to its territorial boundary) under the Marine Act (Northern Ireland) 2013.

This Act enabled the DoE to proceed with its preparation of Northern Ireland's first Marine Plan; this is expected to be published for Public Consultation in early 2016.

Priority 2: Reduction of national emissions (NEC), 'Clean Air Directive'

The Commission is seeking to introduce new measures to reduce air pollution. The clean air policy package will update existing legislation to further reduce harmful emissions from industry, traffic, energy plants and agriculture, with a view to reducing their impact on human health and the environment.

Priority 3: EU Nature Legislation

As part of its Regulatory Fitness and Performance Programme (REFIT), the European Commission is undertaking a Fitness Check of the EU nature legislation, the Birds Directive and the Habitats Directive ('the Nature Directives'). This involves a comprehensive assessment of whether the current regulatory framework is "fit for purpose". The Directives require Member States to take a variety of measures including the designation of protected areas for birds (Special Protection Areas) and for habitats and species of Community interest (Special Areas of Conservation), which together comprise the Natura 2000 network, and the adoption of strict systems of species protection.

Priority 4: Regulation (EU) No 660/2014 Regulation (EC) No 1013/2006 on shipments of waste.

Regulation (EU) No 660/2014 of 15 May 2014 strengthens the requirements for inspection of shipments of waste within the EU and between the EU and third countries. For this purpose, it amends Regulation (EC) No 1013/2006 of 14 June 2006 on shipments of waste. Thus, Member States must have established plans for inspections by 1 January 2017. Member states will be

required to establish one or more inspection plans no later than 1 January 2017 (Article 50). These plans, drawn up for the entire geographical territory of the Member State, should be based on a risk assessment on waste streams and sources of illegal trafficking.

ISSUES FOR INCOMING DEPARTMENT FOR INFRASTRUCTURE

Review of taxi regulations

The Committee considered and agreed a number of statutory rules, which implemented the provisions of the Taxis Act (NI) 2008.

These Rules become effective from May 2016, and will result in changes within the taxi industry, including new classes of taxis; new arrangements where Class A and B taxis can pick up customers from 23:59pm to 6am on Friday and Saturday and on public holidays, within the Belfast zone which is roughly a 2 mile radius around Belfast; requirements for a taximeter and printer; new accessibility requirements; and a maximum fare structure. The overall purpose is to improve consumer protection.

The Committee sought an assurance from the Department that a review would be undertaken immediately following the implementation of the new arrangements to ensure that it is workable and enforceable.

An incoming Committee may wish to review the implementation of these regulations; and ensure the Department undertakes a review. The Committee may also wish to ensure that an analysis is undertaken by the Department to ensure that the regulations do not have a negative impact on the number of disability accessibility taxis that are available.

Planning

Sustainable Development in the Countryside

Throughout the mandate, the Committee has regularly challenged the Department in relation to Planning Policy Statement 21: Sustainable Development in the Countryside. Following publication of the Single Planning

Policy Statement, the Minister indicated his intention to conduct a full review of the policy on the development of the countryside.

On 7th March 2016, the Minister published a call for evidence seeking views from stakeholders on key matters that they consider need to be addressed through the review. Representations can be made until 6th May 2016.

The incoming Committee will wish to consider the outcome of this review in the new mandate.

Wind energy inquiry – review of renewable energy guidance

In March 2015, the Committee published its inquiry report into Wind Energy.

The Committee made a number of recommendations to the Department of the Environment, primarily relating to the need for a more strategic approach in the Department's consideration of planning applications for wind developments, and, in particular, the development of closer liaison between planners at local council level and Strategic Planning Division; and for the effectiveness of PPS18 to be reviewed.

In response, the Department advised that it would undertake a full and comprehensive review of the strategic planning policy for renewable energy development, following publication of SPPS. In February 2016, the Department advised that preparatory work for this review is underway. This review will also include further consideration of some of the recommendations of the Committee's Wind Energy inquiry.

On 7th March 2016 the Minister published a call for evidence, seeking views from stakeholders on key matters that they consider need to be addressed through the review. Representations can be made until 6th May 2016.

The incoming Committee will wish to consider the outcome of this review in the new mandate; and to monitor how the recommendations in the inquiry report will be addressed and implemented.

Statutory Rules carried over from this mandate

The Committee considered the following SL1 policy proposals, and were content with the proposals at that time. The Statutory Rules were not laid in time for the Committee's formal consideration.

S.R. 2016/135 The Motor Vehicles (Driving Licences) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2016

The Committee agreed the SL1 policy proposal at its meeting on 29th February 2016. The Immigration Act of 2014 amended the Road Traffic (Northern Ireland) Order of 1981 by defining the residency requirement for obtaining a driving licence. This measure had the unintended consequence of making it impossible for a non-resident Community licence holder to apply for a driving test, ordered under Article 41 of the Road Traffic Offenders (Northern Ireland) Order 1996, following disqualification.

The purpose of the Rule is to remove the technical block and reinstate the policy which existed prior to the Immigration Act 2014, thereby enabling a Community licence holder to apply for a driving test ordered under Article 41 of the Road Traffic Offenders (Northern Ireland) Order 1996. The Rule is being made to ensure compliance with the Third Driving Licence Directive. It is subject to negative resolution. The Rule was laid on 23rd March 2016, after the last Committee meeting.

S.R. 2016/140 The Taxi Licensing (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2016

The Committee agreed the policy content of the SL1 at its meeting on 29th February. The purpose of this statutory rule is address the issues raised by the Examiner of Statutory Rules to the Taxi Licensing Regulations, made in February, to replace in two instances the word "should" with the word "shall". Due to the minor nature of the amendments the Department did not consult on these changes. The Rule will also correct a provision relating to the colour of roof signs where the word yellow remained in error.

The Rule is subject to negative resolution. The Rule was laid on 23rd March 2016, following the last Committee meeting.

S.R. 2016/148 The Taxis (Taximeters, Devices and Maximum Fares) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2016

The Committee considered and approved an SL1 to amend the Taxis (Taximeters, Devices and Maximum Fares) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015 at its last meeting on 10th March.

The purpose of the Rule is to address the issue of dead miles, include a new rate covering Christmas and New Year period and amend the waiting time element of the tariff.

During its consideration of the Taxis (Taximeters, Devices and Maximum Fares) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015, it became evident late in the process that the proposed maximum fare system might disadvantage some consumers in rural areas, as taxi drivers would be unable to recover the cost of 'dead miles'. The concern was that, if the driver was unable to recover the cost, then they may simply no longer offer to service those areas.

The Rule is subject to the negative resolution procedure. The Rule was laid on 23rd March 2016, following the Committee's last meeting.

S.R. 2016/160 The Motor Vehicles (Construction and Use) (Amendment) Regulations 2016

The Committee considered the policy content of the SL1 at its meeting on 26th November 2015. The purpose of the Rule is to amend the 1999 Regulations to increase the maximum permitted speed and maximum laden weight limits for certain category of tractors. The Rule is subject to the negative resolution procedure. The Rule was laid on 23rd March 2016, following the Committee's last meeting.

S.R. 2016/181 The Road Traffic (Fixed Penalty) (Offences) (Amendment) Order (Northern Ireland) 2016

S.R. 2016/ The Road Traffic (Fixed Penalty) (Amendment) Order (Northern Ireland) 2016

The Committee agreed the SL1 policy proposals of the two Rules at its meeting on 4th February 2016. The purpose of the two Rules is to amend: the Road Traffic (Fixed Penalty) (Offences) Order (Northern Ireland) 1997 to include the insertion of the fixed penalties under the Taxi Act (Northern Ireland) 2008; and the 2007 Regulations to provide for the level of fixed penalty fines for offences against the Taxi regulations. Both rules are subject to negative resolution procedure. The Rules were laid on 23rd March 2016, following the Committee's last meeting.

ISSUES FOR INCOMING DEPARTMENT FOR COMMUNITIES

Local Government reform

The reform of local government took effect from April 2015. Functions were passed to local government from central government, including planning functions.

During this mandate, the Committee has received briefings from NILGA on the key issues facing councils as a result of this reform. The incoming Committee may wish to continue to liaise with NILGA, Solace NI and individual councils in relation to the challenges and benefits from the reform of local government.

Protection of built heritage

The Committee is concerned that the protection of our built heritage will be lost in a larger Department for Communities. There are concerns regarding the listed building grant and the long term protection of our historical assets. The Committee recommends that an incoming Committee consider whether the strategic direction of the protection of our built heritage, and available funding, is adequate.

SUMMARY OF WORK OF THE COMMITTEE FOR 2015/16

During the Assembly session 2015-2016, the Committee for the Environment scrutinized a wide range of issues. This included the completion of the Committee Stage of the Environmental Better Regulation Bill and the Committee Stage of the Scrap Metal Dealers Bill

In the course of this work the Committee engaged with a wide range of stakeholders, both within and outside Parliament Buildings.

During this session, the Committee met 30 times. The majority of the meetings were held in public session. While the Committee has indicated a preference for meeting in public, there are occasions when it must meet in closed session, most notably to discuss Committee reports. The Committee also met informally on a number of occasions to hear briefings and discuss a wide range of issues with stakeholders.

Budget Scrutiny

The Committee took evidence from officials on the Departments on the In-Year Financial Position 2015-16, Voluntary Exit Scheme, Departmental Restructuring and the 2016-17 Budget.

Policy Scrutiny

Over the course of the session the Committee was briefed by the Department on the Strategic Waste Infrastructure Programme, anaerobic policy and review of renewable energy policy, Japanese knotweed and taxi reform. The Committee was also briefed on proposals from the Department for the better management and control of bonfires; the establishment of Independent Environmental Protection Agency; and proposals for a Northern Ireland Climate Change Bill.

Engagement

Engagement was an important area of the Committee's work during 2015/16 with the Committee sponsoring the first Northern Ireland Environment Week in September 2015. This gave MLA's the opportunity to interact with the environmental sector. The Committee hope that this will become an annual event.

The Committee also held two stakeholder events on the Environmental Better Regulation Bill and river pollution.

Visits

The Committee also made a number of visit this session, including to Groomsport Harbour to see the location of Marine Conservation zones, Mid-Ulster Council and the site at Moubouy Road where an illegal waste dump was found in 2012.

MEMBERSHIP THROUGHOUT MANDATE

The Committee has 11 members including a Chairperson and Deputy Chairperson and a quorum of 5. The membership of the Committee throughout the current mandate was as follows:

Ms Anna Lo MBE (Chairperson)
Mrs Pam Cameron (Deputy Chairperson)
Mr Cathal Boylan
Mr Paul Girvan
Mr William Irwin
Mr Alban Maginness
Mr Barry McElduff
Mr Patsy McGlone
Mr Ian Milne
Mr Alastair Patterson
Mr George Robinson MBE

- ¹ With effect from 20 February 2012 Mr Gregory Campbell replaced Ms Paula Bradley
- ² With effect from 23 April 2012 Mr Tom Elliott replaced Mr Danny Kinahan
- ³ With effect from 23 April 2012 Mrs Dolores Kelly replaced Mr Patsy McGlone
- ⁴ With effect from 08 May 2012 Mr Chris Hazzard replaced Mr Willie Clarke
- ⁵ With effect from 18 June 2012 Mr Colum Eastwood replaced Mr John Dallat
- ⁶ With effect from 10 September 2012 Mr Barry McElduff replaced Mr Chris Hazzard
- ⁷ With effect from 01 October 2012 Mr Alastair Ross replaced Mr Gregory Campbell
- ⁸ With effect from 07 April 2013 Mr Francie Molloy has resigned as a Member
- ⁹ With effect from 15 April 2013 Mr Ian Milne replaced Mr Francie Molloy
- ¹⁰ With effect from 07 May 2013 Mr Sydney Anderson replaced Mr Alastair Ross
- ¹¹ With effect from 10 September 2013 Ms Pam Cameron replaced Mr Simon Hamilton as Deputy Chairperson
- ¹² With effect from 16 September 2013 Mr Ian McCrea replaced Mr Sydney Anderson
- ¹³ With effect from 07 October 2013 Mr Alban Maginness replaced Mrs Dolores Kelly
- ¹⁴ With effect from 04 July 2014 Mrs Sandra Overend replaced Mr Tom Elliott
- ¹⁵ With effect from 18 May 2015 Mr Gary Middleton replaced Mr Mr Peter Weir
- ¹⁶ With effect from 5 October 2015 Mr William Irwin replaced Mr Ian McCrea
- ¹⁷ With effect from 9 November 2015 Mr George Robinson replaced Mr Gary Middleton
- ¹⁸ With effect from 16 November 2015 Mr Paul Girvan replaced Lord Morrow
- ¹⁹ With effect from 30 November 2015 Ms Claire Hanna replaced Mr Colum Eastwood
- ²⁰ With effect from 1 February 2016 Mr Alastair Patterson replaced Mrs Sandra Overend
- ²¹ With effect from 8 February 2016 Mr Patsy McGlone replaced Ms Claire Hanna

Committee for the Environment

Committee meetings & visits

Session	Number of meetings held	Percentage minutes public / closed	Number of meetings held outside Parliament Buildings	Number of committee visits
2011/2012	42	96% / 4%	7	8
2012/2013	35	96% / 4%	5	5
2013/2014	38	91% / 9%	2	3
2014/2015	32	91% / 9%	4	7
2015/2016	30	94% / 6%	4	1

Bills

Session	Name of Bill	Committee report (Ordered to print)
2011/2012	The Marine Bill	05 July 2012
2012/2013	The Planning Bill	06 June 2013
2013/2014	The Carrier Bags Bill	26 November 2013
	The Local Government Bill	20 February 2014
2014/2015	The Road Traffic (Amendment) Bill	19 March 2015
2015/2016	The Environmental Better Regulation Bill	18 November 2015
	The Scrap Metal Dealers Bill	11 February 2016

Committee Inquiries

Session	Name of report	Committee Report (ordered to print)	Date debated in Plenary (if applicable)
2011/2012			
2012/2013	Inquiry into Used Tyre Disposal	25 April 2013	15 May 2012
2013/2014			
2014/2015	Inquiry into Wind Energy	29 January 2015	3 March 2015

2015/2016			
-----------	--	--	--

Statutory Rules

Session	Number agreed by Committee
2011/2012	78
2012/2013	35
2013/2014	34
2014/2015	86
2015/2016	38

Committee Reports (excluding Bill and Inquiry reports)

Session	Name of report	Date (date approved by Committee)	Date debated in Plenary (if appropriate)
2011/2012			
2012/2013	End of Session Report 2011 –2012	20 September 2013	
2013/2014	End of Session Report 2012 - 2013	19 September 2013	
2014/2015	End of Session Report 2013 - 2014 Committee visit to VITO and Metabolon 14-16 October 2014	18 September 2014 23 October 2014	
2015/2016	End of Session Report 2014/15 Report on River Pollution Stakeholder Event	17 September 2015 29 February 2016	08 March 2016

Witnesses

Session	Number of Organisations who give evidence to the committee
2011/2012	57
2012/2013	30
2013/2014	45
2014/2015	26
2015/2016	25

Committee for the Environment

Expenditure for the period 1 September 2015 – 29 March 2016

Budget area	Details	Expenditure
Committee Travel - committee members and staff travel and subsistence in relation to visits and meetings outside Parliament Buildings	Committee visits to: • Mobouy Road Londonderry • Mid Ulster Council (meeting & visit) External Committee meetings in: • RSPB WOW Centre, Belfast • Bryson Recycling • AFBI	£998.29
Advertising – the cost of public notices relating to committee inquiries, the committee stage of Bills and meetings held outside Parliament Buildings	Includes the cost of public notices in relation to: • Scrap Metal Dealers Bill	£637.87
General expenses	Cost of refreshments for committee meetings, committee events, working lunches, seminars, room hire, witness expenses, and conference fees for members. Includes the cost of: • A programme of seminars held as part of Northern Ireland Environment Week. • A Committee Stakeholder event on river pollution.	£3326.67
Total Expenditure		£4962.83