

**From the Office of the Minister
Michelle O'Neill MLA**



Department of
**Agriculture and
Rural Development**

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AN ROINN

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Forbartha Tuaithe**

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Our Ref: INV/1153/2015

Date: 26 November 2015

William Irwin MLA
Chairperson
Committee for Agriculture and Rural Development
Room 244
Parliament Buildings
Ballymiscaw
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William, a chara

FISHERIES BILL

I am writing to inform you that, following the Executive's agreement on 26 March 2015 to the final policy proposals for a Fisheries Bill, the drafting of the Bill has been completed by the Office of the Legislative Counsel. Following the First Minister and deputy First Minister's agreement on 24 November 2015 that I take an urgent decision to introduce the Fisheries Bill in the Assembly, I propose, subject to securing the agreement of the Speaker, to introduce the Bill in the Assembly on 7 December 2015.

I enclose, in confidence, a copy of the draft Bill and the related Explanatory and Financial Memorandum.

When we met recently we discussed the challenging timescale for progressing the Bill through the Assembly's legislative process within the current mandate. As discussed when we met, given the clear time constraints, I have not brought forward provisions in relation to aquaculture in the Bill; while these are desirable, they are not essential at this stage. This will reduce the size of the Bill and hopefully increase the chances of it completing its Assembly stages. These provisions can be brought forward in the future.

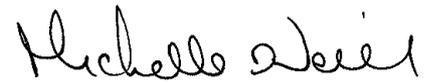
I wish to ensure that this important Bill can complete its passage in the time that remains. I am of course mindful of the severe pressures now facing the Assembly, and the Committee in particular, in undertaking a very substantial workload in the restricted time that remains within this mandate.

I would therefore propose, if you think it would be helpful, that my officials meet with you at your earliest convenience to examine how best the Committee's scrutiny of the Fisheries Bill might be managed in the most effective way. Please contact John Terrington from the Fisheries Bill Team on 028 9052 4297 to make the necessary arrangements.

If you have a hearing difficulty you can contact
the Department via Text Relay. Dial 18002 + number



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MICHELLE O'NEILL MLA
Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development

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