



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Windsor Framework Democratic Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of Proceedings

6 November 2025

Meeting Location: Room 30

Present:

Ciara Ferguson MLA (Chairperson)

David Brooks MLA (Deputy Chairperson)

Declan Kearney MLA

Peter Martin MLA

Eóin Tennyson MLA

Present by Video:

Steve Aiken MLA

Jonathan Buckley MLA

Kate Nicholl MLA

Emma Sheerin MLA

Apologies:

None.

In Attendance:

Christopher Dickison (Senior Assistant Clerk)

Jessica Jacques (Senior Assistant Clerk)

Oliver Bellew (Assistant Clerk)

Carla Campbell (Clerical Supervisor)

Shelley Garner (Clerical Officer)

In Attendance by Video:

Damien Brown (Clerical Officer)

The meeting commenced at 10.08am in public session.

1. Apologies

As above.

2. Declaration of Members' Interest

None.

3. Draft Minutes

Agreed: The Committee agreed the minutes of the meeting held on 2 October 2025.

4. Matters Arising

Following the Committee hearing oral evidence at its meeting on 2 October 2025 from the Federation of Small Businesses Northern Ireland, in relation to its report entitled “Windsor Framework Realities: Barriers to Trade in the UK Internal Market”, the Deputy Chairperson noted the findings of the Windsor Framework Independent Monitoring Report published on 5 November 2025.

5. COM/2023/258 Proposal for a Regulation establishing the Union Customs Code and the European Union Customs Authority, and repealing Regulation (EU) No 952/2013 - Oral Evidence

The Committee considered the following proposed EU act:

COM/2023/258 Proposal for a Regulation establishing the Union Customs Code and the European Customs Authority, and repealing Regulation (EU) No 952/2013.

The Committee noted that the proposed EU act has not been notified to the Committee, but following a work planning exercise on 20 February 2025, the Committee agreed to gather evidence on the proposed EU act.

The Committee noted that, at its meeting on 11 September 2025, it had agreed to invite officials from the Office of the Northern Ireland Executive in Brussels to provide oral evidence on the proposed EU act. The Committee further noted that this oral evidence had initially been scheduled for 23 October 2025, but had been rescheduled on 20 October 2025 because, at that stage, ministerial approval was still awaited on the relevant briefing notes.

The following official joined the meeting at 10.13am:

Nuala McNamee	Deputy Director, EU Institutions, Office of the Northern Ireland Executive in Brussels
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The official gave oral evidence on the proposed EU act.

Jonathan Buckley MLA joined the meeting at 10.17am.

A question and answer session followed.

The evidence session was reported by Hansard.

The official left the meeting at 10.34am.

6. **COM/2023/414 Proposal for a Regulation on the production and marketing of plant reproductive material in the Union, amending Regulations (EU) 2016/2031, 2017/625 and 2018/848 of the European Parliament and of the Council, and repealing Council Directives 66/401/EEC, 66/402/EEC, 68/193/EEC, 2002/53/EC, 2002/54/EC, 2002/55/EC, 2002/56/EC, 2002/57/EC, 2008/72/EC and 2008/90/EC (Regulation on plant reproductive material)**
7. **COM/2023/415 Proposal for a Regulation on the production and marketing of forest reproductive material, amending Regulations (EU) 2016/2031 and 2017/625 of the European Parliament and of the Council and repealing Council Directive 1999/105/EC (Regulation on forest reproductive material)**

The Committee agreed to consider agenda items 6 and 7 together.

The Committee noted that the following proposed EU acts have not been notified to the Committee, but at its meeting on 11 September 2025, the Committee agreed to request an assessment of impact on each:

- a) COM/2023/414 Proposal for a Regulation on the production and marketing of plant reproductive material in the Union; and
- b) COM/2023/415 Proposal for a Regulation on the production and marketing of forest reproductive material in the Union.

The Committee considered assessments of impact from the Department of Agriculture, Environment, and Rural Affairs on each proposed EU act.

Agreed: Regarding COM/2023/414 Proposal for a Regulation on the production and marketing of plant reproductive material in the Union, the Committee agreed to request that the Department provide a revised assessment of impact if any changes are proposed by the Council of the European Union or the European Parliament, which would have a significant impact specific to everyday life of communities in Northern Ireland in a way that is liable to persist.

Agreed: Regarding COM/2023/415 Proposal for a Regulation on the production and marketing of forest reproductive material, the Committee agreed to request that the Department provide a revised assessment of impact if any changes are

proposed by the Council of the European Union or the European Parliament, which would have a significant impact specific to everyday life of communities in Northern Ireland in a way that is liable to persist.

8. COM/2023/224 Proposal for a Regulation on compulsory licensing for crisis management and amending Regulation (EC) No 816/2006

The Committee noted that the following proposed EU act had not been notified to the Committee, but at its meeting on 11 September 2025, the Committee agreed to request an assessment of impact on it:

COM/2023/224 Proposal for a Regulation on compulsory licensing for crisis management and amending Regulation (EC) No 816/2006.

The Committee considered an assessment of impact from the Department of Health on the proposed EU act.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to request that the Department provide a revised assessment of impact on the provisionally agreed text of the proposed EU act, including any input from the UK Government which may be required.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to ask for confirmation from the Department that the proposed EU act, if published and implemented, would not disrupt access to UK-produced medicines and vaccines in Northern Ireland.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to request legal advice on the provisionally agreed text of the proposed EU act, including whether it significantly differs (in whole or in part) from the context or scope of the EU instrument which it would amend or replace.

9. End of Session Report 2024-2025

The Committee considered a draft End of Session Report which provided a summary of its key activities, outputs and outcomes for the period February 2024 to end of August 2025.

Agreed: The Committee agreed the Remit, Powers and Membership section, paragraphs 1 to 7.

Agreed: The Committee agreed the report's introductory paragraphs and Committee Meetings section, paragraphs 8 to 11.

Agreed: The Committee agreed the introductory paragraphs of the Key Activities, Outputs and Achievements section, paragraphs 12 to 14.

Agreed: The Committee agreed the Inquiries section (within Key Activities, Outputs and Achievements), paragraphs 15 to 18.

Agreed: The Committee agreed the Key Engagements section (within Key Activities, Outputs and Achievements), paragraphs 19 to 22.

Agreed: The Committee agreed Annex A – Committee Expenditure.

Agreed: The Committee agreed Annex B – Inquiries carried out during the reporting period.

The Committee noted that the End of Session report, as agreed by the Committee, will be published on the Committee webpage in due course.

10. Correspondence

10.1 The Committee noted a response from the UK Government regarding COM/2025/531 Proposal for a Regulation as regards the simplification of certain requirements and procedures for chemical products.

10.2 The Committee noted a copy of correspondence from the House of Lords Northern Ireland Scrutiny Committee (NISC) to the UK Government regarding COM/2025/531 Proposal for a Regulation as regards the simplification of certain requirements and procedures for chemical products.

10.3 The Committee considered a response from the UK Government regarding COM/2025/386 Proposal for a Regulation on the European Chemicals Agency.

10.4 The Committee noted a copy of correspondence from the NISC to the UK Government regarding COM/2025/386 Proposal for a Regulation on the European Chemicals Agency.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to request further legal advice on whether the proposed EU act should be considered a 'replacement EU act' or a 'new EU act',

and whether the whole proposal, or the replacement parts of the proposal, significantly differ from the content or scope of the EU instruments which they would amend.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to share a link to the European Commission's consultation on the proposed EU act on its webpage and social media.

10.5 The Committee noted a response from the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs regarding COM/2023/770 Proposal for a Regulation on the protection of animals during transport and related operations.

10.6 The Committee considered a response from the UK Government regarding its request for HMRC officials to attend a meeting of the Committee to discuss concerns raised by KME Steelworks Ltd.

10.7 The Committee considered correspondence from the Committee for the Economy, including a response from the Department for the Economy regarding EU customs duty on raw sheet aluminium.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, and the Exchequer Secretary to the Treasury, to invite HMRC officials to attend a Committee meeting and discuss the implications of relevant current and proposed EU customs legislation, including the processes involved for businesses in Northern Ireland, and how the issues they face are likely to be resolved. The Committee further agreed to share a copy of this correspondence with the Independent Reviewer on the Windsor Framework.

10.8 The Committee noted a response from the Executive Office regarding recommendations in the Independent Review of the Windsor Framework.

10.9 The Committee noted correspondence from the NISC regarding its Inquiry Report on Northern Ireland after Brexit: Strengthening Northern Ireland's voice in the context of the Windsor Framework.

10.10 The Committee noted a transcript of the Northern Ireland Affairs Committee's (NIAC) oral evidence session on the operation of the Windsor Framework.

10.11 The Committee noted that it would further consider elements of items 10.9 and 10.10 at an upcoming informal meeting.

10.12 The Committee noted correspondence from the Executive Office in relation to current proposed EU legislation relevant to Northern Ireland.

10.13 The Committee noted a Report from the Office of the Northern Ireland Executive in Brussels covering the period July to September 2025.

10.14 The Committee considered correspondence from the EU Affairs Office regarding the participation of the Chairperson and deputy Chairperson in the Committee of the Regions UK Contact Group on 18 November 2025.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that the Chairperson and Deputy Chairperson would provide feedback, if appropriate, following the meeting.

10.15 The Committee noted a quarterly update from RalSe on COM/2024/561 Proposal for a Directive as regards electric vehicle supply equipment, compressed gas dispensers, and electricity, gas and thermal energy meters.

10.16 The Committee noted correspondence from the Committee for Justice regarding the Crime and Policing Bill.

10.17 The Committee noted an invitation from Electrical Safety First to its event on Safer Homes for Everyone.

10.18 The Committee noted an invitation from the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission to its Annual Statement 2025 Launch.

10.19 The Committee noted a copy of correspondence from the NISC to the UK Government regarding its document review.

10.20 The Committee noted a copy of correspondence from the NISC to the UK Government regarding COM/2025/526 Proposal for a Regulation as regards dates of application and transitional provisions.

10.21 The Committee noted a copy of correspondence from the NISC to the UK Government regarding COM/2025/137 Proposal for a Regulation as regards certain market rules and sectoral support measures in the wine sector.

10.22 The Committee noted a copy of correspondence from the NISC to the UK Government regarding C/2025/3986, a Delegated Regulation on household tumble dryers.

11. Chairperson's Business

11.1 The Committee noted a copy of the European Commission Work Programme for 2026 and noted that the Northern Ireland Assembly Research and Information Service (RaISe) had been asked to identify anything in the Work Programme that could potentially be a 'new' or 'replacement' EU act. The Committee further noted that RaISe staff would attend the next meeting of the Committee to provide a briefing on this research.

11.2 The Chairperson reminded Members that an informal meeting is scheduled for 20 November 2025 to consider procedural matters arising from the Independent Review of the Windsor Framework.

12. Any other business

A Member commented on concerns raised by the British Dental Association regarding the use of dental amalgam in Northern Ireland.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department of Health to ask whether they have been made aware of these issues.

13. Date, time, and place of next meeting

The next meeting is scheduled for 13 November 2025 at 10:00am in Room 30.

The meeting was adjourned at 11.05am.

Ciara Ferguson, MLA

Chairperson, Windsor Framework Democratic Scrutiny Committee