



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Committee for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs

Minutes of Proceedings

Thursday 25 March 2021

Meeting Location: Virtual Meeting by StarLeaf

Present by Video or Teleconference:

Declan McAleer MLA (Chairperson)
Philip McGuigan MLA (Deputy Chairperson)
Clare Bailey MLA
Rosemary Barton MLA
John Blair MLA
Maurice Bradley MLA
Harry Harvey MLA
William Irwin MLA
Patsy McGlone MLA

Apologies: None

In Attendance by Video or Teleconference:

Stella McArdle, Clerk
Barbara Love, Clerk
Elaine Farrell, Assistant Clerk
Marion Johnson, Clerical Supervisor
Kate Duffy, Clerical Officer
Mark Allen, Research Officer (agenda item 13)
Susie Cave, Research Officer (agenda item 13)



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The meeting commenced at 10.03 a.m. in open session

1. Apologies

None.

2. Chairperson's Business

Noted: The Committee noted the note of the informal roundtable meeting with Members of the BEIS Committee and other devolved administrations which took place on 15 March 2021 which the Chairperson and Deputy Chairperson attended, to discuss Net Zero and the UN Climate Summits.

Noted: The Committee noted that the meeting pack for the 15 April 2021 meeting will issue one day late due to Easter Recess.

3. Draft Minutes

Agreed: The Committee agreed the minutes of the meeting held on 18 March 2021.

4. Matters arising

None.

5. Departmental Oral Evidence Session: Programme for Government

The following departmental officials joined the meeting at 10.07 a.m.:

Arron Wright, Director of Green Growth
Dave Foster, Director of Regulatory and Natural Resources
Michael McCallion, Head of Waste
David Kyle, DVO, International Trade Facilitation



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The officials briefed the Committee and this was followed by a questions and answer session.

Mr Blair joined the meeting at 10.10 a.m.

Mr Irwin declared an interest that he is an active farmer.

The oral evidence session was reported by Hansard.

The Chairperson thanked the officials for their attendance.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department to request an update on the progress of the Future Agricultural Policy and the Future Rural Policy, in addition to a timeline for the publication of the Ammonia Strategy.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department to request details on the role of the Independent Environmental Protection Agency, as committed to in the NDNA.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department to request an analysis of the recent discussion document on the Circular Economy Package/Waste Measures, to include a breakdown by council area.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department to ask that it liaises with the Department for Infrastructure to provide details of the evidence gathered in relation to PFG Indicator 25 on the percentage of journeys made by walking/cycling/public transport.

6. Departmental Written Briefing: SR 2021/44 – The Zoonoses (Amendment) Order (Northern Ireland) 2021



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The Committee considered SR 2021/44: The Zoonoses (Amendment) Order (Northern Ireland) 2021 which will make Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus 2 (SARSCoV-2), the virus that causes COVID-19, notifiable when it is detected in animals and ensures that the Department can take appropriate control measures if required to protect human health.

Question put and agreed:

“That the Committee for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs has considered SR 2021/44: The Zoonoses (Amendment) Order (Northern Ireland) 2021 and has no objection to the Rule”.

7. Departmental Written Briefing: Green Growth Strategy Framework

The Committee considered the departmental written briefing on the Green Growth Strategy Framework and were advised to forward any questions to clerk for the Department by close of play.

8. Departmental Written Briefing: EU Transition Update

The Committee noted the departmental written briefing on EU Transition Update and were advised to forward questions to the clerk for the Department by close of play.

9. Departmental Written Briefing: Water Quality

The Committee noted the departmental written briefing on Water Quality and were advised to forward questions to the clerk for the Department by close of play.



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10. Committee Consideration of Review of Independent Panel on Review of Decisions

The Committee considered the information gathered during the review on the Independent Panel on Review of Decisions.

Noted: The Committee noted the request for legal advice which has been submitted for response.

Agreed: The Committee noted the letter from Barnwell Farms and agreed that it would be submitted along with the correspondence to the Minister and placed on the Committee webpage.

Agreed: The Committee agreed the correspondence to the Minister regarding the Committee position on the Review of Independent Panel on Review of Decisions, subject to amendment at paragraph 6 and the associated paragraph in the Annex, and agreed that it should issue and a copy to be placed on the Committee's webpage.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to inform all witnesses who provided evidence to the Committee on the review that the letter to the Minister will be placed on the Committee's webpage.

Ms Bailey left the meeting at 11.26 a.m.

11. Correspondence

The Committee noted the following:

- i. The Livestock and Meat Commission 2019-20 Annual Report and Accounts;
- ii. A written briefing from the Environmental Justice Network Ireland the Environmental Gathering on Waste Crime and Mobuoy;
- iii. Correspondence from Mr B Little on the Independent Panel on Review of Decisions;



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- iv. Confirmation from DAERA that officials will be available for the evidence session scheduled for 6 May 2021 on Nature Friendly Farming;
- v. Correspondence from the Electricity Association of Ireland regarding a study of the electricity system in 2030.
- vi. The Thirty Second report from the Examiner of Statutory Rules.

The Committee considered correspondence from a member of the public in relation to the closure of a rural primary school in West Fermanagh.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to forward the letter to the Department, with the permission of the correspondent, to ask if any action can be taken by DAERA in connection with closure of the school on the basis of rural needs and rural deprivation. The Committee further agreed to write to the Department for Education to ask if a rural needs impact assessment has been completed prior to the decision being made to close the school.

The Committee considered correspondence from the EU Affairs Manager on the UKG Quarterly Report on the Progress of Common Frameworks.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department to request an update on the progress of the 15 Common Frameworks it is responsible for as well as an indication of when they are expected to be cleared by the Executive.

12.AOB

None.

The meeting moved into closed session at 11.35 a.m.



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13. Forward Work Programme

The Committee discussed its Forward Work Programme for April – July 2021 and noted a number of amendments. The Committee discussed the likely workload expected between now and end of mandate and noted that legislation would take priority.

Mr McGlone left the meeting at 11.45 a.m.

Mr Blair left the meeting at 11.58 a.m.

Agreed: The Committee agreed the Forward Work Programme.

14. Date, Time and Place of the next meeting

The next meeting of the Committee for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs will take place on Thursday 15 April 2021 at 10.00 a.m.

The meeting was adjourned at 12.09 p.m.

Declan McAleer MLA

Chairperson, Committee for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs