

COMMITTEE FOR AGRICULTURE AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT

MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS

TUESDAY 8 APRIL 2014
ROOM 30, PARLIAMENT BUILDINGS

Present: Mr Paul Frew MLA (Chairperson)
Mr Joe Byrne MLA (Deputy Chairperson)
Mr Thomas Buchanan MLA
Ms Judith Cochrane MLA
Mrs Jo-Anne Dobson MLA
Mr William Irwin MLA
Mr Ian Milne MLA
Mr Declan McAleer MLA
Ms Michelle McIlveen MLA
Mr Oliver McMullan MLA
Mr Robin Swann MLA

In attendance: Ms Stella McArdle, Committee Clerk
Ms Elaine Farrell, Assistant Clerk
Mr Mark O'Hare, Clerical Supervisor
Ms Michelle McDowell, Clerical Officer

1.34 p.m. The meeting commenced in Closed Session

The Committee discussed the allocation of questions to Rivers Agency.

1.39 p.m. Mr Swann joined the meeting.

1.40 p.m. The meeting moved into Open Session

1. Apologies

There are no apologies.

2. Chairperson's Business

The Chairperson advised Members to ensure that their meeting pack tablet is switched on periodically over the Easter recess period to ensure that it updates.

The Chairperson advised the Committee that he and the deputy Chairperson had met with Sainsbury's on Monday 7 April 2014 to discuss the potential penalties to be imposed by NIMEA.

The Chairperson advised the Committee that an informal meeting has been arranged with the Fishermen's' Forum on Monday 28 April 2014 at 12.30 p.m. Any Members is free to attend.

3. Minutes of the meeting held on 1 April 2014

Agreed: The Committee agreed the draft minutes of the meeting held on 1 April 2014.

4. Matters Arising

Agreed: The Committee noted the correspondence dated 27 March 2014 in respect of issues raised at the meeting on 11 March 2014. The Committee agreed to write to the Department to ask how much in total has been taken off the Northern Ireland Single Farm Payment block grant.

Noted: The Committee noted the copied correspondence dated 28 March 2014 from the Department in respect of an individual complaint in respect of Single Farm Payments.

Noted: The Committee noted the correspondence dated 28 March 2014 in respect of the Single Farm Payment Trading deadline.

Noted: The Committee noted the copied correspondence dated 31 March 2014 to the ETI Committee in respect of the Impact of Ground-Based Solar PV on Single Farm Payments.

Agreed: The Committee noted the emailed correspondence dated 31 March 2014 from Mr Lambe in respect of the appeals mechanism for Single Farm Payment. The Committee agreed to write again to Mr Lambe to advise on the approach previously agreed.

Noted: The Committee noted the correspondence from the Department on the HQ relocation programme.

5. Update on TB Eradication: Oral briefing DARD

The following Departmental officials joined the meeting at 1.50 p.m.

Kate Davey, Principal Officer
Colin Hart, Deputy Chief Veterinary Officer
Roly Harwood, Senior Principal Veterinary Officer
Andrew Kell, Principal Officer
Ian McKee, Principal Officer

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

1.55 p.m. Mr Buchanan joined the meeting.
2.01 p.m. Ms Cochrane joined the meeting.
2.05 p.m. Mr Milne joined the meeting.
2.11 p.m. Ms Cochrane left the meeting.
2.16 p.m. Ms Cochrane rejoined the meeting.
2.22 p.m. Mr McMullan left the meeting.
2.37 p.m. Mr McAleer joined the meeting.
2.42 p.m. Mr Byrne left the meeting.
2.48 p.m. Ms McIlveen left the meeting.
3.04 p.m. Mr McAleer left the meeting.
3.05 p.m. Ms McIlveen rejoined the meeting.
3.06 p.m. Ms Cochrane left the meeting.
3.08 p.m. Mr Buchanan left the meeting.
3.14 p.m. Mrs Dobson left the meeting.

Mr Dobson declared an interest as a farmer.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department to seek an update on Recommendation 4 from the Committee report on Bovine TB.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department to request information on the percentage of reactor cattle which enter the food chain.

Agreed: The Committee agreed the draft Press Release calling on the Department to do more to eradicate Bovine TB.

6. Reservoirs Bill: Clerk's memo on key issues and other papers

- Agreed:* The Committee agreed to add the submissions from the Ulster Farmers' Union and the Department in respect of the Reservoirs Bill to the Committee website.
- Agreed:* The Committee agreed to add the financial information from NI Water on the scale of costs associated with maintaining impounding reservoirs to the Committee website.
- Agreed:* The Committee agreed to forward the NI Water correspondence to Rivers Agency and request that they prepare a supplementary financial memorandum.
- Agreed:* The Committee noted the correspondence dated 7 April 2014 from Belfast City Council in respect of issues raised at the meeting on 25 February 2014 and agreed to add it to the Committee website.

7. Reservoirs Bill: Oral briefing Rivers Agency

The following Departmental officials joined the meeting at 3.19 p.m.

David Porter, Director of Development
Kieran Brazier, Head of Bill Team

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

- 3.20 p.m. Mr Byrne rejoined the meeting.*
- 3.23 p.m. Mrs Dobson rejoined the meeting.*
- 3.26 p.m. Mr Buchanan rejoined the meeting.*
- 3.31 p.m. Ms Cochrane and Mr McMullan rejoined the meeting.*
- 3.46 p.m. Ms McIlveen left the meeting.*
- 3.49 p.m. Mr Milne left the meeting.*
- 3.52 p.m. Ms McIlveen rejoined the meeting.*
- 3.55 p.m. Ms McIlveen left the meeting.*
- 4.07 p.m. Mr McIlveen rejoined the meeting.*
- 4.12 p.m. Ms Cochrane left the meeting.*
- 4.16 p.m. Mr Milne rejoined the meeting.*
- 4.17 p.m. Mr Swann left the meeting.*
- 4.26 p.m. Mr McMullan left the meeting.*
- 4.29 p.m. Mr Irwin left the meeting.*
- 4.33 p.m. Mr McMullan rejoined the meeting.*
- 4.46 p.m. Mr Swann rejoined the meeting.*
- 5.06 p.m. Mr McMullan left the meeting.*

- Agreed:* The Committee agreed to write to Rivers Agency to ask that it considers a number of draft amendments to the Bill.
- Agreed:* The Committee agreed to write to Rivers Agency to request that it discusses with the Minister the concerns of the Committee in respect of decommissioned reservoirs and the loss of community and environmental assets.
- Agreed:* The Committee agreed to write to Rivers Agency to enquire if it had considered a Statutory Rule to deal with the regulation of reservoirs via a licensing scheme.

8. SR 2014/58: The Zoonoses (Fees) (Amendment) Regulations (NI) 2014

Question put and agreed:

The Committee for Agriculture and Rural Development has considered SR 2014/58: The Zoonoses (Fees) (Amendment) Regulations (NI) 2014 and has no objections to the rule.

9. SR 2014/66: The Common Agricultural Policy Single Payment and Support Schemes (Amendment) Regulations (NI) 2014

Question put and agreed:

That the Committee for Agriculture and Rural Development has considered SR 2104/66: The Common Agricultural Policy Single Farm Payment and Support Schemes (Amendment) Regulations (NI) 2014 and has no objections to the rule.

10. SR 2014/86: The Agriculture (Student Fees) (Amendment) Regulations (NI) 2014

Question put and agreed:

That the Committee for Agriculture and Rural Development has considered SR 2014/86: The Agriculture (Student Fees) (Amendment) Regulations (NI) 2014 and has no objections to the rule.

11. SR 2014/92: The Single Common Market Organisation (Consequential Amendments) Regulations (NI) 2014

Question put and agreed:

That the Committee for Agriculture and Rural Development has considered SR 2014/92: The Single Common Market Organisation (Consequential Amendments) Regulations (NI) 2014 and has no objections to the rule.

12. SR 2014/54: The Importation of Animals (Amendment) Order (NI) 2014

Noted: The Committee noted SR 2014/54: The Importation of Animals (Amendment) Order (NI) 2014.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department to ask what procedures it has in place to prevent diseases coming into Northern Ireland via imported cattle.

13. Possible changes to Brucellosis Legislation if there are no confirmed outbreaks during the winter testing programme

Agreed: The Committee noted the correspondence from the Department on its proposals to issue a public consultation on the possible changes to Brucellosis legislation if there are no confirmed outbreaks during the winter testing programme. The Committee agreed that the Department issues the consultation and returns to the Committee with an analysis of the results.

14. Classical Scrapie Control Options: Written Briefing DARD

Agreed: The Committee noted the proposals to amend the Classical Scrapie Control regulations and agreed that the Department issues the consultation and returns to the Committee with an analysis of the results.

15. Consultation on proposals to revise the NI Good Agricultural and Environmental Condition Standards with effect from 1 January 2015: pre-consultation

Agreed: The Committee noted the Department's proposals to consult on revise the NI Good Agricultural and Environmental Condition Standards with effect from 1 January 2015. The Committee agreed that the Department should issue the consultation and brief the Committee on the outcome.

16. Correspondence

Noted: The Committee noted the correspondence from the Barroso Desk Officers which outlines EU Events for the rest of 2014.

Noted: The Committee noted the DARD Investment Strategy for March 2014.

17. Forward Work Programme

Agreed: The Committee agreed to defer the review on Rural Isolation and Farmer Welfare until September/October 2014.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to meet informally with the Northern Ireland Agricultural Consultants Association.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to visit the reservoir in Creggan Country Park in early June 2014.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to consider attendance at the National Ploughing Championships in September 2014 at another meeting.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to schedule a briefing with the Ulster Business School on 13 May 2014.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that there would not be an official Committee presence at the Balmoral Show, other than the DARD Breakfast on 15 May 2014.

Agreed: The Committee agreed the requirement for extra meetings as and when required.

Agreed: The Committee agreed the Forward Work Programme.

18. AOB

There was no other business.

19. Date and time of the next meeting

The next meeting of the Committee for Agriculture and Rural Development will take place on Tuesday 29 April 2014 at 1.30 p.m. in Room 30, Parliament Buildings.

The meeting adjourned at 5.34 p.m.

Paul Frew, Chairperson, Committee for Agriculture and Rural Development

Date