

COMMITTEE FOR AGRICULTURE AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT

MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS

**TUESDAY 1 DECEMBER 2015
ROOM 30, PARLIAMENT BUILDINGS**

- Present: Mr William Irwin MLA (Chairperson)
Mr Joe Byrne MLA (Deputy Chairperson)
Mr Sydney Anderson MLA
Mrs Jo-Anne Dobson MLA
Mr Declan McAleer MLA
Mr Kieran McCarthy MLA
Mr Ian McCrea MLA
Mr Oliver McMullan MLA
Mr Ian Milne MLA
Mr Edwin Poots MLA
Mr Robin Swann MLA
- In attendance: Ms Stella McArdle, Committee Clerk
Mr Mark O'Hare, Clerical Supervisor
Ms Marion Johnson, Clerical Officer
Ms Amy Barr, Legislative Studies & Practice Student

1.38 p.m. The meeting commenced in Closed Session.

1.45 p.m. Mr Anderson joined the meeting

1.50 p.m. Mr McAleer joined the meeting

- 1. Rural Needs Bill: Consideration of Key Issues and Evidence**
The Committee discussed the key issues and evidence presented in the Rural Needs Bill.

2.10 p.m. Mr Milne left the meeting.

2. Committee Discussion: Fisheries Bill

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Minister for Agriculture and Rural Development regarding concerns it had with the timeframe for the Fisheries Bill.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Committee for Culture, Arts and Leisure asking if it is prepared to undertake the scrutiny of and report on the clauses relevant to its remit.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to hold an all-day meeting on 8th December to allow scrutiny of the Fisheries Bill.

2.28 p.m. *Mr Swann joined the meeting.*

2.29 p.m. *Mrs Dobson joined the meeting.*

2.33 p.m. *Mr McAleer left the meeting.*

2.42 p.m. *The meeting moved into open session.*

3. Apologies

There are no apologies.

4. Chairperson's Business

The Chairperson advised Members that the planned Dublin Visit would be postponed due to the unavailability of Members.

Agreed: The Committee agreed another date would be arranged for this visit.

5. Minutes of the meeting held on 24 November 2015

Agreed: The Committee agreed the draft minutes of the meeting held on 24 November 2015.

6. Matters Arising

Noted: The Committee noted that correspondence from DARD regarding a stakeholder event taking place on Thursday, 10 December 2015 at 12.45 in the Conference Hall at Loughry Campus.

Agreed: The Committee noted correspondence from DARD dated 19 November 2015 providing clarification on a number of issues relating to the Sustainable Use of Poultry Litter Project and agreed to send the response to the Committee for Enterprise, Trade and Investment for their information.

Agreed: The Committee noted correspondence from DARD dated 25 November 2015 providing a response to the issues raised by the Horticulture Forum in their briefing to the Committee and forward this response to the Horticulture Forum.

Agreed: The Committee noted correspondence from DARD dated 25 November 2015 regarding the increasing of maximum penalties for offences committed under the Welfare of Animals Act (NI) 2011 and acknowledging the Committee's request that DARD should consider banning the keeping of animals on land owned by individuals who have been convicted of an offence under the Welfare of Animals Act (NI) 2011. The Committee agreed to forward this information to the Committee for Justice.

- Agreed:* The Committee noted the list of organisations and officials who have presented to the Committee over the year and agreed to send them electronic Christmas cards.
- Noted:* The Committee noted the account of discussions held with Members of the EFRA Committee and the Groceries Code Adjudicator during the Committee's visit to London on 18 November 2015.
- Noted:* The Committee noted the account of discussions held with the Institute of Global Food Security, Queens University Belfast on 17th November 2015.

7. Oral Briefing DARD: Rural Needs Bill

The following officials joined the meeting at 2.46 p.m.

Louise Warde Hunter, Head of Central Policy
Colette McMaster, Assistant Secretary, Director of Food, Farm and Rural Policy
Astrid Stuart, Head of Rural Proofing Branch

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

- 2.56 p.m. Mr McCrea joined the meeting.*
2.56 p.m. Mr Swann left the meeting.
2.58 p.m. Mrs Dobson left the meeting.
2.59 p.m. Mr Poots joined the meeting.
3.26 p.m. Mr Anderson left the meeting.
3.30 p.m. Mr Anderson rejoined the meeting.
3.34 p.m. Mr Byrne left the meeting.
3.37 p.m. Mr Byrne rejoined the meeting.
3.46 p.m. Mr McAleer left the meeting.
3.54 p.m. Mrs Dobson rejoined the meeting.
3.55 p.m. Mr Anderson left the meeting.
- 3.55 p.m. The DARD officials left the meeting.*
- 3.56 p.m. Mr McMullan left the meeting.*

- Agreed:* The Committee agreed the contents of the correspondence received from the Examiner of Statutory Rules on the Delegated Powers in the Bill dated 26 November 2015.

8. Oral Briefing RalSe: Inquiry into Better Regulation

The following representative joined the meeting at 3.56 p.m.

Mark Allen, Assembly Research Officer

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

4.08 p.m. Mr McMullan rejoined the meeting.

4.09 p.m. Mr Swann rejoined the meeting.

4.10 p.m. Mr McAleer rejoined the meeting.

4.15 p.m. Mr Byrne left the meeting.

Mrs Dobson declared an interest as her husband is a beef farmer.

Mr Irwin declared an interest that he is a farmer.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to ask Mr Allen to investigate further statistics on cases of non-compliance.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to forward the Briefing Papers to DARD, requesting them to respond to the issues raised by the Research Officer.

4.29 p.m. Mr Anderson rejoined the meeting.

4.30 p.m. The representative left the meeting.

4.30 p.m. Mr McCrea left the meeting.

9. Oral Briefing DARD: Update on 2015 Single Applications (including inspections)

The following officials joined the meeting at 4.31 p.m.

Pauline Rooney, Acting Director of EU Area Based Schemes Division
Jason Foy, Acting Head of Area based Scheme Development Unit
Richard Crowe, Head of Countryside Management

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

4.35 p.m. Mr Poots rejoined the meeting.

4.38 p.m. Mrs Dobson declared an interest that her husband receives a Basic Payment

Mr Irwin declared an interest regards receipt of a Basic Payment

Agreed: The Committee agreed to ask the Department to compile comparative data with the Republic of Ireland on duplicate fields.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to ask the Department to clarify certain issues around the young farmer scheme including date on certification of

relevant qualifications, ability of a minor partner to dissolve the business partnership contract and geo spatial issues.

4.48 p.m. *Mr McMullan left the meeting.*

4.50 p.m. *Mr McCrea rejoined the meeting.*

4.56 p.m. *Mr McMullan rejoined the meeting.*

4.57 p.m. *Mr McMullan left the meeting.*

4.57 p.m. *The DARD officials left the meeting.*

4.57 p.m. *The meeting suspended.*

5.14 p.m. *The meeting resumed in Open Session with the following Members in attendance: Mr Anderson, Mr Irwin, Mr McCarthy and Mr McCrea.*

10. Oral Briefing DARD: Fishing Industry

The following officials joined the meeting at 5.14 p.m.

Ian Humes, Head of Sea Fisheries Policy and Grants Branch
Paddy Campbell, Deputy Principal, Sea Fisheries Policy & Grants Branch

Pieter-Jan Schon, Principal Scientific Officer, Agri-food and Biosciences Institute (AFBI)

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

5.15 p.m. *Mrs Dobson rejoined the meeting.*

5.16 p.m. *Mr McAleer rejoined the meeting.*

5.17 p.m. *Mr McAleer left the meeting.*

5.19 p.m. *Mr Swann rejoined the meeting.*

5.31 p.m. *Mr McMullan rejoined the meeting.*

5.37 p.m. *The officials left the meeting.*

11. Oral Briefing DARD: Mid-year progress report on the DARD Business Plan targets

Agreed: The Committee agreed to reschedule this agenda item for next week the 8th December.

12. Written Brief DARD: The Zoonoses (Fees) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2016

The Committee noted an update from DARD about the proposed public consultation on The Zoonoses (Fees) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2016 and the proposed fee changes.

13. Written Briefing DARD: The Northern Ireland Poultry Health Assurance Scheme (Fees) (Amendment) Order (NI) 2016

The Committee noted an update from DARD about the proposed public consultation on The Northern Ireland Poultry Health Assurance Scheme (Fees) (Amendment) Order (NI) 2016 and the proposed fee changes.

14. Written Briefing DARD: The Scrapie (Fees) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2016

The Committee noted an update from DARD about the proposed public consultation on The Scrapie (Fees) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2016 and the proposed fee changes.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to ask the Department to clarify the increase in fee changes.

15. Written Brief DARD SL1: The Seed Potatoes Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015

The Committee noted the changes that will be introduced by The Seed Potatoes Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2015 and that the Rule will be laid under the negative resolution procedure and it is anticipated that it will come into operation on 01 January 2016.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to ask the Department to clarify the legislative programme for Seed Potatoes in the Republic of Ireland.

16. Written Brief DARD: The 2014 TB Programme Annual Report

Agreed: The Committee noted the findings of the Annual Report and agreed to request an update by DARD officials be scheduled after recess and as soon as the forward work programme allows.

17. Correspondence

Noted: The Committee noted correspondence from DARD dated 24 November 2015 notifying the Committee that the Chair of the TB Strategic Partnership Group has written to advise the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development that the TBSPG wish to defer the target date for the completion of the TB Eradication Strategy and Implementation Action Plan beyond 31 December 2015.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to an informal meeting with the Chairperson and Deputy Chairperson and the TB Strategic Partnership Group.

- Noted:* The Committee noted correspondence from the Committee for Employment and Learning, dated 19 November 2015, regarding the impact of immigration rules on attracting people to veterinary positions in Northern Ireland.
- Noted:* The Committee noted correspondence from the Committee for Enterprise, Trade and Investment, dated 25 November 2015, regarding a briefing from the Consumer Council (CC) on their recent policy work in relation to food.
- Noted:* The Committee noted correspondence from the Committee for the Office of the First Minister and deputy First Minister dated 25 November 2015 regarding a request to DARD about how they are engaging with their counterparts in Whitehall on the matter of the UK Government's EU reform agenda.
- Noted:* The Committee noted correspondence from the EU Affairs Manager regarding the third 'Meet Your MEP' event with Diane Dodds MEP.

18. Forward Work Programme

- Agreed:* The Committee agreed the Forward Work Programme.

19. AOB

There was no other business.

20. Date and time of the next meeting.

The next meeting of the Committee for Agriculture and Rural Development will take place on Tuesday 08 December 2015 at 1.30 p.m. in Room 30, Parliament Buildings.

5.50 p.m. The meeting adjourned.

William Irwin, Chairperson, Committee for Agriculture and Rural Development

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