

## COMMITTEE FOR AGRICULTURE AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT

### MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS

**TUESDAY 16 FEBRUARY 2016  
ROOM 30, PARLIAMENT BUILDINGS**

Present: Mr William Irwin MLA (Chairperson)  
Mr Seán Rogers MLA (Deputy Chairperson)  
Mr Sydney Anderson MLA  
Mrs Jo-Anne Dobson  
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  
Ms Lynda Conlon, Assistant Assembly Clerk  
Mr Mark O'Hare, Clerical Supervisor  
Ms Marion Johnson, Clerical Officer

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

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

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

1.48 p.m. *The meeting moved in Open Session.*

#### **1. Apologies**

There are no apologies.

#### **2. Chairperson's Business**

The Chairperson advised the Committee that he has accepted an invitation to address the ARD Departmental Group Meeting organised by NICVA in Cookstown on 11 March 2016.

### **3. Minutes of the meeting held on 09 February 2016**

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed the draft minutes of the meeting held on 09 February 2016.

### **4. Matters Arising**

*Noted:* The Committee noted correspondence from the Minister, dated 02 February 2016, informing Members that the Executive has agreed an Emergency Financial Assistance Scheme for non-domestic properties affected by flooding.

*Noted:* The Committee noted correspondence from the Minister, dated 02 February 2016, advising Members of her intention to extend the Homeowners Flood Protection Grant Scheme to small businesses, including farms, later in 2016.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to request a further briefing on the Emergency Financial Assistance Scheme and the extension of the Homeowners Flood Protection Grant Scheme when details of both have been agreed and finalised.

*Agreed:* The Committee noted correspondence from the Minister, dated 02 February 2016, informing Members that the Department will be undertaking a review of recent flooding events to be chaired by Alan Strong and agreed to request a briefing on the terms of reference and proposed methodology for the review once these have been agreed.

*Noted:* The Committee noted correspondence from the Department for Regional Development, dated 10 February 2016, providing a response to the Committee's request for clarification of the role of that Department in flood prevention and alleviation in Northern Ireland.

The Chairperson advised the Committee that the Rivers Agency intend to invite members of the public affected by recent flooding to give an account of their experience at an open meeting on 16 March 2016.

## **5. Oral Briefing DARD: Fisheries Bill - Position on Amendments**

The Chairperson advised the Committee that the Minister has indicated that, in addition to notices of intent that clauses 1 to 5 and 7 to 18 not stand part of the Fisheries Bill, the Minister also plans to table 3 minor technical amendments to clause 6 of the Bill.

The Chair advised the Committee that Consideration Stage of the Fisheries Bill is scheduled for Tuesday, 23 February 2016.

## **6. Oral Briefing DARD: Inquiry into Better Regulation**

The following Departmental officials joined the meeting at 1.52 p.m.

Paul McGurnaghan, Central Services, Information Systems  
Pauline Rooney, Head of EU Area Based Schemes Division  
Dera Watson, Review of Decisions  
John McConnell, Animal Identification, Legislation and Welfare

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

*1.56 p.m. Mr Milne joined the meeting.*

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to request details of the proportion of all eligible applications in Northern Ireland that are subject to appeal via the Review of Decisions process, as compared with Scotland, England and Wales.

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

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

*2.12 p.m. Mr Rogers joined the meeting.*

*Mr Irwin declared an interest that he is a farmer.*

*2.14 p.m. Mr McCarthy left the meeting.*

*Mr Rogers declared an interest that he is a part-time farmer.*

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

*2.19 p.m. The meeting moved into Closed Session.*

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

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to include an account of the Inquiry work completed to date, together with the interim findings, in the Committee's End of Mandate Report.

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to write to the Minister outlining the issues identified during the Inquiry into Better Regulation and requesting that these are brought to the attention of the incoming DAERA administration.

2.26 p.m. *The meeting moved into Open Session.*

## **7. Oral Briefing DARD: Evidence and Innovation Strategy 2015-17**

The following Departmental officials joined the meeting at 2.26 p.m.

Alistair Carson, Central Policy, Research Policy Branch  
Paul Devine, Senior Scientific Officer, Central Policy, Science Advisory

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

2.27 p.m. *Mrs Dobson left the meeting.*  
2.29 p.m. *Mr Poots joined the meeting.*  
2.40 p.m. *Mr McMullan rejoined the meeting.*  
2.44 p.m. *Mr McCrea joined the meeting.*  
2.44 p.m. *Mr Milne left the meeting.*  
2.47 p.m. *Mr Anderson left the meeting.*  
2.49 p.m. *Mr McCrea left the meeting.*  
2.50 p.m. *Mr McCrea rejoined the meeting.*

*Mr Poots declared an interest that he supplies material to an anaerobic digester.*

2.58 p.m. *Mr Swann left the meeting.*

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

## **8. Oral Briefing DARD: Support for Areas of Natural Constraint; Designation of Areas of Natural Constraint; and Review of Coupled Support Options**

The following Departmental officials joined the meeting at 2.59 p.m.

Norman Fulton, Chief Agricultural Economist, Central Policy

Rosemary Agnew, Central Policy, Policy Development Branch  
Mark McLean, Principal Agricultural Economist, Central Policy, Policy  
Development Branch

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

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed to request that the Department provide  
details of agricultural incomes for lowland farms and LFA farms for  
2015.

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

*3.17 p.m.* *Mr McCarthy rejoined the meeting.*

*3.20 p.m.* *Mr Rogers left the meeting.*

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

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

#### **9. Written Briefing DARD: S.R.2016/15 The Areas of Natural Constraint Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2016**

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed that it has considered SR 2016/15 The  
Areas of Natural Constraint Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2016  
and has no objections to the rule.

#### **10. Written Briefing SL1: Agricultural (Student Fees) (Amendment) Regulations**

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

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed that the SL1 moves to the next legislative  
stage.

#### **11. Written Briefing DARD: S.R.2016/22 The Bovine Viral Diarrhoea Eradication Scheme Order (Northern Ireland) 2016**

*Agreed:* The Committee agreed that it has considered SR 2016/22 The  
Bovine Viral Diarrhoea Eradication Scheme Order (Northern  
Ireland) 2016 and, subject to comment from the Examiner of  
Statutory Rules, has no objections to the rule.

## **12. Correspondence**

- Noted:* The Committee noted the Department's Spring Supplementary Estimates 2015-16 and Vote on Account 2016-2017.
- Noted:* The Committee noted a NICCY report analysing government spending on children in Northern Ireland for the year 2012/13.
- Noted:* The Committee noted correspondence from Mr David Dobbins, dated 03 February 2016.
- Agreed:* The Committee noted correspondence from Mr Oisin Murnion, dated 07 February 2016, and agreed that, as the matter falls under the sub-judice rule (Standing Order 73), it would not be appropriate to accede to his request for a meeting.

## **13. Forward Work Programme**

- Agreed:* The Committee agreed the Forward Work Programme.
- Agreed:* The Committee agreed to approve the draft press release for the visit to view the Toome sluice gates.

## **14. AOB**

## **15. Date and time of the next meeting**

The next meeting of the Committee for Agriculture and Rural Development will take place on Tuesday 23 February 2016 at 1.30 p.m. in Room 30, Parliament Buildings.

*3.30 p.m. The meeting adjourned.*

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William Irwin, Chairperson, Committee for Agriculture and Rural Development

**23/02/2016**

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Date