

COMMITTEE FOR AGRICULTURE AND RURAL DEVELOPMENT

MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS

**TUESDAY 29 SEPTEMBER 2015
ROOM 30, PARLIAMENT BUILDINGS**

Present: Mr William Irwin MLA (Chairperson)
Mr Joe Byrne MLA (Deputy Chairperson)
Mr Sydney Anderson MLA
Mr Tom Buchanan MLA
Mrs Jo-Anne Dobson MLA
Mr Declan McAleer MLA
Mr Kieran McCarthy 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 Clerk
Mr Mark O'Hare, Clerical Supervisor
Ms Dagmar Walgraeve, Clerical Officer

1.35 p.m. The meeting commenced in Open Session.

1. Apologies

There are no apologies.

2. Chairperson's Business

The Chairperson advised Members that he has accepted an invitation to participate in a panel discussion at the Agenda NI Agri-Food conference on 03 December 2015.

The Chairperson advised Members that the visit to the Northern Ireland Ploughing Championships is to take place on Friday 09 October 2015 and asked Members to indicate their intention to attend.

3. Minutes of the meeting held on 22 September 2015

Agreed: The Committee agreed the draft minutes of the meeting held on 22 September 2015.

4. Matters Arising

Noted: The Committee noted correspondence from the Department dated 21 September 2015 providing an update on the DARD Voluntary Exit Scheme.

Agreed: The Committee noted the receipt of the UFU's response to the Department of the Environment consultation on proposals to increase the maximum construction speed and weights of agricultural tractors and trailers and agreed to await receipt of the NIAPA consultation response before responding to the Committee for the Environment.

Noted: The Committee noted correspondence from the Secretary of State for Business, Innovation and Skills in response to a request from the Committee to consider extending the remit of the Grocery Code Adjudicator to the whole food supply chain.

Noted: The Committee noted correspondence from the Department dated 24 September 2015 informing the Committee that further details on the response to the Dairy Crisis will be forwarded as soon as possible.

Noted: The Committee noted correspondence from the Department dated 24 September 2015 informing the Committee that research on rural proofing will be commissioned in October and an update will be provided in due course.

Noted: The Committee noted correspondence from the Department dated 24 September 2015 informing the Committee that an update on the Treecheck App will be provided when the relevant information is collated.

Noted: The Committee noted correspondence from the Department dated 24 September 2015 informing the Committee a response on the

Review of Labelling will be forwarded to the Committee as soon as possible.

Agreed: The Committee noted correspondence from the Department dated 24 September 2015 regarding the DEFRA submission on simplification and outlining the DARD response areas and agreed to pass this information to RaISe to assist with ongoing comparative research on the Paying Agency Regulations.

Noted: The Committee noted correspondence from the Department dated 24 September 2015 informing the Committee that a response on the Farm Business Improvement Scheme will be forwarded as soon as possible.

Noted: The Committee noted correspondence from the Department dated 24 September 2015 providing an update on the avian influenza outbreak in England.

Noted: The Committee noted correspondence from the Department dated 24 September 2015 providing an update on the Review of Implementation of the Welfare of Animals Act.

Noted: The Committee noted correspondence from the Department dated 24 September 2015 providing an update on the DARD relocation project.

Agreed: The Committee noted correspondence from the Department dated 24 September 2015 on the issue of BPS and duplicate fields and agreed to pass this information to RaISe to assist with ongoing comparative research on the Paying Agency Regulations.

Noted: The Committee noted correspondence from the Department dated 24 September 2015 confirming that DARD does not have lead responsibility for any of the Building a United Community headline actions.

Noted: The Committee noted correspondence from the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety dated 24 September 2015 providing details of the services available to assist farmers affected by mental health problems.

5. Written Briefing DARD SR 2014/326 The Rural Development Programme Regulations (NI) 2015

Question put and agreed:

That the Committee for Agriculture and Rural Development has considered SR 2014/326 The Rural Development Programme Regulations (NI) 2015 and, subject to comment from the Examiner of Statutory Rules, has no objections to the rule.

6. Committee Discussion: EFRA Committee Inquiry into Farmgate Prices

1.44 p.m. Mr Milne joined the meeting.
1.51 p.m. Mr McMullen left the meeting.
1.51 p.m. Mr Swann joined the meeting.
1.59 p.m. Mrs Dobson joined the meeting.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that the Clerk prepare a draft written submission to the EFRA Committee Inquiry, to be considered by the Committee at the meeting of 06 October 2015.

7. Committee End of Session Report

Agreed: The Committee noted the End of Session Report 2014-2015 and agreed that it should be published on the Assembly website.

8. Correspondence

Noted: The Committee noted an invitation to the Future Farmers Conference at the University of Warwick on 20-21 October 2015.

Noted: The Committee noted an invitation to the AgendaNI Agriculture and Food Conference on 03 December 2015.

Noted: The Committee noted details of an upcoming event on Northern Ireland and the EU Referendum at Queen's on 06 October 2015.

9. Forward Work Programme

Agreed: The Committee agreed the Forward Work Programme.

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

10. Inquiry into Better Regulation – Special Advisor

2.06 p.m. *Mrs Dobson left the meeting.*
2.06 p.m. *Mr McAleer left the meeting.*
2.08 p.m. *Mr McMullen rejoined the meeting.*
2.09 p.m. *Mr McAleer rejoined the meeting.*
2.13 p.m. *Mrs Dobson rejoined the meeting*
2.14 p.m. *Mr Poots joined the meeting.*

Agreed: The Committee agreed not to appoint a Special Advisor using the procurement route.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to defer the DETI oral briefing scheduled for 13 October 2015 and request a factual written submission to the Inquiry into Better Regulation.

2.16 p.m. *Mr Anderson left the meeting.*

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

11. Oral Briefing Ulster Farmers' Union: Inquiry into Better Regulation

The following representatives joined the meeting at 2.17 p.m.

Ian Marshall, President, UFU
Crosby Cleland, Beef and Lamb Policy Officer, UFU

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

2.33 p.m. *Mrs Dobson declared an interest as her husband is a beef and cereal farmer.*
2.35 p.m. *Mrs Dobson left the meeting.*
2.39 p.m. *Mr Poots declared an interest as a member of the UFU.*
3.01 p.m. *Mr Poots left the meeting.*
3.04 p.m. *The UFU representatives left the meeting.*

12. Oral Briefing Northern Ireland Agricultural Producers Association: Inquiry into Better Regulation

The following representatives joined the meeting at 3.05 p.m.

Michael Clarke, Chairman, Northern Ireland Agricultural Producers Association

Jim Carmichael, Development Officer, Northern Ireland Agricultural Producers Association

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

- 3.19 p.m. Mr McMullen left the meeting.*
- 3.24 p.m. Mr Poots rejoined the meeting.*
- 3.35 p.m. Mrs Dobson rejoined the meeting.*
- 3.36 p.m. Mr Swann left the meeting*
- 3.37p.m. The NIAPA representatives left the meeting.*

13.AOB

Agreed: The Committee agreed to request a briefing from the Chief Veterinary Officer to discuss issues raised regarding injured or disabled animals at slaughter houses.

3.38 p.m. The meeting moved into closed session.

14. Inquiry into Better Regulation

Agreed: The Committee agreed to request that the RaISe Research Officer provide a paper on the Review of Decisions process.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to request that the RaISe Research Officer provide a paper on the inspection processes carried out by DARD and NIEA.

3.46 p.m. Mr Milne left the meeting.

15. Date and time of the next meeting

The next meeting of the Committee for Agriculture and Rural Development will take place on Tuesday 06 October 2015 at 1.30 p.m. in Room 30, Parliament Buildings.

3.48 p.m. The meeting adjourned.

William Irwin, Chairperson, Committee for Agriculture and Rural Development

Date