

COMMITTEE FOR AGRICULTURE, ENVIRONMENT AND RURAL AFFAIRS

MINUTES OF PROCEEDINGS

**THURSDAY 4 FEBRUARY 2021
VIRTUAL MEETING, STARLEAF**

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

In attendance: Ms Stella McArdle, Committee Clerk
Ms Barbara Love, Committee Clerk
Ms Elaine Farrell, Assistant Clerk
Ms Angela McParland, Assistant Clerk
Ms Marion Johnson, Clerical Supervisor
Ms Kate Duffy, Clerical Officer

The Committee commenced at 9.04 a.m. in Closed Session

1. Apologies

None.

2. Departmental Briefing on security issues at ports

The following officials joined the meeting via StarLeaf at 9.04 a.m.

Dr Denis McMahon, Permanent Secretary
Robert Huey, Chief Veterinary Officer

Brian Doherty, Deputy Secretary
Mark Livingstone, Brexit Contingency Planning
Michael Oliver, DALO

The officials briefed the Committee on issues surrounding security at the ports.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to move into Open Session

The meeting moved into Open Session at 9.23 a.m.

The officials continued their briefing on the issues surrounding security at the ports.

This was followed by a question and answer session.

Mr Bradley joined the meeting at 9.34 a.m.

Mr Blair left the meeting at 9.55 a.m.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department to request details on numbers of animals currently coming across from GB to NI.

The Chairperson thanked the officials for their attendance.

3. Chairperson's Business

The Chairperson advised the Committee that the Department failed to provide a briefing paper on the budget and several other briefings were late for inclusion in today's meeting pack.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Permanent Secretary to express its dissatisfaction with the provision of papers to the Committee and to request that the issue is addressed with immediate effect.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write Gordon Lyons to welcome him as the new DAERA Minister.

4. Minutes of the meeting held on 28 January 2021

Agreed: The Committee agreed the minutes of the meeting held on 28 January 2021.

5. Matters arising

Mr McGuigan raised an issue in relation to correspondence from Business in the Community which the Committee considered at the meeting on 28 January 2021.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department and the Department for the Economy in support of the request made by Business in the Community for funding for its work on climate change initiatives with local businesses.

6. Oral Evidence Session DAERA: Implications of EU Exit for the Local Fishing Fleet

The following officials joined the meeting via StarLeaf at 10.33 a.m.

Owen Lyttle, Director of Marine and Fisheries
Ciaran Cunningham, Acting Head of Marine and Fisheries

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

The oral evidence session was reported by Hansard.

The Chairperson left the meeting at 10.45 a.m.

The Deputy Chairperson assumed the Chair.

The Deputy Chairperson thanked the officials for their attendance.

7. Written Briefing DAERA: SI Defra CFP/13 The Common Fisheries Policy (Amendment etc.) (EU Exit) Regulations 2021

The Deputy Chairperson asked the Committee to note that the Department has advised that Minister Lyons has indicated to his officials that he requires further information before the Statutory Instrument can be considered by the Committee.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to defer consideration of the agenda item.

8. Oral Evidence Session DAERA: Budget 2021-2022

The following departmental officials joined the meeting via StarLeaf at 11.01 a.m.

David Reid, Finance Director

Roget Downey, Deputy Finance Director
Lynda Lowe, Head of Financial Planning

As no budget briefing papers were available, the officials briefed the Committee on the January Monitoring Round and this was followed by a question and answer session.

The oral evidence session was reported by Hansard.

The Chairperson rejoined the meeting at 11.01 a.m. and resumed the Chair.

The Chairperson thanked the officials for their attendance.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to reconsider the agenda item on the budget at the meeting on 11 February 2021 as the Department had not been able to provide any briefing papers to the Committee.

9. Oral Evidence Session DAERA: SL1 The Direct Payments to Farmers (Simplifications) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2021 and SL1 The Direct Payments to Farmers (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2021

The following departmental officials joined the meeting via StarLeaf at 11.27 a.m.

Dr Rosemary Agnew, Director of Brexit
Mark McLean, Principal Agricultural Economist

The officials briefed the Committee on SL1 The Direct Payments to Farmers (Simplifications) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2021 and SL1 The Direct Payments to Farmers (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2021 this was followed by a question and answer session on both SL1s.

The oral evidence session was reported by Hansard.

Agreed: The Committee noted SL1 The Direct Payments to Farmers (Simplifications) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2021 and agreed that it should move to the next legislative stage.

Agreed: The Committee noted the SL1 on The Direct Payments to Farmers (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2021 and agreed that it should move to the next legislative stage.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department to request information on the outcome of the Inter-departmental meeting on the Green Growth Strategy which took place in January 2021.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department to request an update on the progress of the Green Growth Strategy.

10. Written Briefing DAERA: Consultation on Proposed Fees and Charges for Northern Ireland Participants in the UK ETS

Agreed: The Committee noted the written briefing on the Consultation on Proposed Fees and Charges for Northern Ireland Participants in the UK ETS and agreed to write to the Department to request an analysis of consultation responses and proposed amendments it may consider.

Mr Irwin left the meeting at 12.14 p.m.

Mr McGlone left the meeting at 12.14 p.m.

11. Correspondence

The Committee noted the following:

- i. Correspondence from HMRC on operational and practical issues arising from EU Exit;
- ii. Correspondence from the Committee for the Executive Office on its Terms of Reference for the Committee overseeing EU Exit Matters;
- iii. Correspondence from Minister Poots to the Speaker regarding Lucy's Law Petition;
- iv. The ISNI Investment Activity Report dated 31 October 2020;

The Committee considered correspondence from the Department on an update on Tranche 3 of the Farm Business Improvement Scheme.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department to request that it provides the Committee with a further update once all letters of offer have been issued and accepted.

The Committee considered correspondence from the arc21 Acting Chief Executive to the Ministers for Communities, DAERA, Economy and Infrastructure on the inaugural meeting of the Inter-Ministerial Group for Green Growth.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to arc21 to request that it keeps the Committee informed of any developments.

The Committee considered copied correspondence from NIFF to the Defra Secretary of State on the apportioning of additional quota between the UK administrations.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to NIFF to advise that the Committee is awaiting a response from the Defra Secretary of State on issues that were raised by the meeting on 19 January 2021.

The Committee considered correspondence from the European Select Committee to the Defra Parliamentary Under Secretary of State on EM 13944/20: Proposal for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council concerning batteries and waste batteries, repealing Directive 2006/66/EC and amending Regulation (EU) No. 2019/1020.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the European Select Committee to request that the Committee is kept informed of the response in relation to this issue.

The Committee considered correspondence from BEIS Committee regarding the 26th UN Climate Change Conference in November 2021.

Agreed: The Committee agreed that the Chairperson and the clerk should liaise with the BEIS Committee's operations manager regarding potential Committee collaboration.

The Committee considered correspondence from the Committee for Infrastructure on a briefing it had on 20 January 2021 with the NI Retail Consortium, Logistics UK and the Road Haulage Association on Brexit related issues and that it had agreed to write to the DAERA Minister.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Committee for Infrastructure to ask that it keeps it informed of any developments.

The Committee considered correspondence from the Department on the Climate Change Committee advice for Northern Ireland in relation to reducing its 2050 emissions.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to request RaISe to identify key stakeholders to write to in respect of the issues raised by the Climate Change Committee.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to request an oral briefing from the Department in due course on the its response to the Climate Change Committee and the NI Climate Change Bill.

12.AOB

None.

13.Forward Work Programme

Noted: The Committee noted that the potential motion for nature friendly farming has been deferred to 18 February 2021.

Agreed: The Committee noted that the evidence session with the Climate Change Committee is scheduled for 4 March 2021 and agreed to request a RaISe briefing on what other jurisdictions, including the Republic of Ireland, are doing regarding their contribution to net zero.

Noted: The Committee noted that the consultation on the Programme for Government has been published and the Department have been asked to provide oral evidence on its contribution in due course.

Noted: The Committee noted the Shared Environmental Services has indicated that it will not be attending the meeting on 11 February and that a further date has been requested.

Noted: The Committee noted the consideration of written evidence from LAGS on the Future of the Rural Development Policy has been deferred until 18 February due to the need to reschedule the Budget briefing for 11 February 2021.

Noted: The Committee noted that the Department has advised that it requires additional time to prepare for the briefing session on Implications of EU Exit and the impact of TCA on SRs; this has been deferred to 25 February 2021.

Agreed: The Committee agreed the draft Forward Work Programme.

14.Date and time of the next meeting

The next virtual meeting virtual of the Committee for Agriculture, Environment and Rural affairs will take place on Thursday 11 February 2021 at 9.30 a.m. and will be streamed from Room 30, Parliament Buildings.

The meeting adjourned at 12.17 p.m.

Declan McAleer, Chairperson, Committee for Agriculture and Rural Development

Date