



Northern Ireland  
Assembly

# Committee for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs

## Minutes of Proceedings

Wednesday 16 June 2021

**Meeting Location:** Virtual Meeting via StarLeaf

**Present by Video or Teleconference:**

Declan McAleer MLA (Chairperson)  
Philip McGuigan MLA (Deputy Chairperson)  
Clare Bailey MLA  
Rosemary Barton MLA  
John Blair MLA  
Maurice Bradley MLA  
William Irwin MLA

**Apologies:**

Harry Harvey MLA  
Patsy McGlone MLA

**In Attendance by Video or Teleconference:**

Nick Henry, Clerk  
Elaine Farrell, Assistant Clerk  
Marion Johnson, Clerical Supervisor  
Kate Duffy, Clerical Officer  
Mark Allen, Research Officer (agenda item 8)

The meeting commenced at 2.17 p.m. in Open Session



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**1. Apologies**

As above.

**2. Chairperson's Business**

None.

**3. Draft Minutes**

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed the minutes of the meeting held on 10 June 2021.

**4. Matters Arising**

**Agreed:** The Committee noted SR 2021-161: The Sea Fish Industry (Coronavirus) (Fixed Costs) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2021 which was laid by the Department in the Business Office on 15 June 2021 and is subject to Affirmative Resolution; the Committee agreed to forward the SR to the Examiner of Statutory Rules for scrutiny.

The Committee considered the departmental written briefing on SL1: The Direct Payments to Farmers (Controls and Checks) (Coronavirus) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2021 which proposes a minor change to the percentage check for on-the-spot checks which will be carried out on beneficiaries of the Covid-19 compensation scheme.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed that it was content with the merits of the policy and that it should progress to the next legislative stage.



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## 5. Oral Evidence Session Climate Change Bill: NI Environment Link

The following representatives from NI Environment Link joined the meeting by StarLeaf at 2.20 p.m.

Malachy Campbell, Senior Policy Officer NI Environment Link  
Phil Carson, Senior Policy Officer, RSPB  
Laura Neal, NI based lawyer for Friends of the Earth

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

The oral evidence session was reported by Hansard.

Mr Blair joined the meeting at 2.24 p.m.

Mr McGuigan declared an interest that he is a co-sponsor of the Climate Change Bill.

Mr Blair left the meeting at 3.25 p.m.

The Chairperson thanked the representatives for their attendance.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to publish the written evidence from NI Environment Link on the Committee's webpage.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to move to agenda item 7 and 8 next.

## 6. Oral Evidence Session Climate Change Bill: Climate NI

The following representatives from Climate NI joined the meeting by StarLeaf at 3.32 p.m

Dr Jade Berman, Acting Climate NI Manager  
Stephen Jones, Acting NI Resilience Coordinator  
Ciaran Fox, Chair of NI Partnership



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

The oral evidence session was reported by Hansard.

Ms Bailey declared an interest that she is the lead sponsor of the Climate Change Bill.

Mr Bradley and Mr Irwin left the meeting at 4.04 p.m.

The Clerk informed the Committee that, under Standing Order 115(6), William Irwin MLA had delegated authority to xx to vote on his behalf, during any absence during the Committee meeting.

The Chairperson thanked the representatives for their attendance.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to publish the written evidence from Climate NI on the Committee's webpage.

### **7. RaiSe Briefing: Horse Racing (Amendment) Bill 2021**

The Assembly Research Officer joined the meeting at 4.07 p.m. and briefed the Committee on his research paper on the Horse Racing (Amendment) Bill 2021.

The Chairperson thanked the Research Officer for briefing the Committee.

The clerk briefed the Committee on the work plan for the Committee Stage of the Horse Racing (Amendment) Bill 2021.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed the signposting advertisement for the call for evidence for the Horse Racing (Amendment) Bill 2021.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed the list of stakeholders to request oral and written evidence from.



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**Agreed:** The Committee agreed the Citizen Space Template for the purpose of gathering written evidence and that it should launch for a period of 8 weeks from 23 June 2021.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed the scheduled dates to receive oral evidence from stakeholders.

### **8. Departmental Written Briefing: Covid 19 Monthly Updates**

The Committee considered the written briefing from the Department on the monthly Covid 19 Update alongside the Covid 19 Environmental Impacts Dashboard.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to forward questions for the Department on the Covid 19 Updates to the clerk by close of play.

### **9. Correspondence**

The Committee noted the following:

- i. Correspondence from the Chairpersons' Liaison Group on research commissioned by the Education Committee from RaISe entitled, "Gender Budgeting and Gender Inequalities in Northern Irish Education Policy";
- ii. Correspondence from the Department on follow-up issues from the meeting on 27 May 2021;
- iii. Correspondence from the EU Affairs Sub Committee advising that it has written DEFRA seeking a further update in the future pertaining to phytosanitary checks on certain plant products.

The Committee considered copied correspondence from the Committee for the Economy to the DAERA Minister seeking funding up to £150k for a feasibility study into the development of a Decarbonised Agricultural Footprint (DCAF) proposal with EnerChem Solutions Ltd.



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**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to write to EnerChem to seek information on the DCAF proposal and to thank the Committee for the Economy for its correspondence.

The Committee considered correspondence from the EU Affairs Manager on correspondence from the Cabinet Office to the UK Parliament Committee on the 14 Common Frameworks which are of relevance to the work of the AERA Committee and which intersect with the Protocol and may have scope for policy divergence between NI and GB. The Committee noted that the UKG is currently mapping which EU legislation is likely to amend the Protocol.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to write to the UK Parliament Committee requesting an update in any documentation which will issue by the UKG in relation to the mapping exercise.

The Committee considered correspondence from the Department on issues arising from the meeting on 6 May 2021 including the appointment of a non-executive member to the Office for Environmental Protection and the role/responsibilities that appointment will have including an overlap with the Environmental Protection Agency.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to write to the Department to advise that it is content with the proposed arrangements for the appointment of an independent member from NI to the Office for Environmental Protection.

The Committee considered correspondence from Mid and East Antrim Borough Council in respect of outstanding questions following the attendance of the Chief Executive at a previous meeting of the Committee.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to include any significant aspects into the Committee's Report on the investigation into the withdrawal of staff from the ports; the Committee further agreed to publish the correspondence on the Committee's webpage.

### 10. Forward Work Programme

The Chairperson reminded the Committee of the two stakeholder events for the Climate Change Bill which are taking place on 17 June at 10.00 a.m. and 6.30 p.m.



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**Noted:** The Committee noted the additional virtual Committee meeting on 23 June at 2.30 p.m. to consider the draft report on the investigation into the withdrawal of staff from the ports due to security issues.

**Noted:** The Committee noted the departmental oral briefing scheduled for 8 July on the consultation the Department intends to run over the summer period on the eradication of TB.

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

### 11.AOB

The Committee discussed additional invitations to stakeholders for the Climate Change Bill stakeholder event on 17 June 2021.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to extend invitations to a number of additional stakeholders as requested by Ms Bailey.

### 12.Date, time and place of the next meeting

The next meeting of the Committee for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs will take place on Wednesday 23 June 2021 at 2.30 p.m. and will be a virtual meeting via StarLeaf to consider the draft report on the Committee's consideration of the withdrawal of staff from the ports.

There will be a further hybrid meeting on Thursday 24 June 2021 at 10.00 a.m.

The meeting was adjourned at 4.33 p.m.



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**Declan McAleer MLA**  
**Chairperson, Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs Committee**