



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs Committee

Minutes of Proceedings

09 May 2024

Room 21, Parliament Buildings

Present: Tom Elliott MLA (Chairperson)

Declan McAleer MLA (Deputy Chairperson)

John Blair MLA

Tom Buchanan MLA

William Irwin MLA

Patsy McGlone MLA

Michelle McIlveen MLA

Áine Murphy MLA

Present by Video or Teleconference:

None

Apologies: Nicola Brogan MLA

In Attendance: Dr Janice Thompson, Assembly Clerk

Mrs Gillian Barker, Assistant Assembly Clerk

Mr Michael Greer, Clerical Supervisor

Mr Damien Brown, Clerical Officer

The Chair reminded members of the 'Declaration of Interests' and asked Members if there are any new interests to declare, relevant to the items under consideration at this meeting, that had not already been declared at the first meeting.

The meeting opened in public session at 10.04 am

1. Apologies

As detailed above.

2. Minutes

Minutes of 2 May 2024 were agreed and signed.

3. Chairperson's Business

The Chairperson advised that Minister Muir is urging Farm Businesses who have not yet submitted their 2024 Single Applications to do so before midnight on 15 May 2024. The Minister is advising that completing applications before this deadline will avoid late claim penalties and allow DAERA to issue prompt payments from 2 September 2024.

The Chairperson also advised there is an online application service available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Agreed: The Committee were content to note.

The Chairperson advised that at last week's meeting the SL1 – 'Draft 'Dangerous Dogs (Designated Types) Order (Northern Ireland) 2024' was considered and it was agreed to request that Officials attend this week's meeting to discuss the matter. However, due to the availability of the Officials the SL1 will now be considered at next week's meeting, 16 May 2024.

Agreed: The Committee were content to note.

Mr John Blair MLA joined the meeting at 10.09 am

4. Matters Arising

The Chairperson advised the Committee it has received a response from the Department dated 1 May 2024, in reply to our letter of the 19th March, and follow up from oral briefing on 18 April, requesting further information on the process of verifying emissions records from businesses and the nature of the role of the Northern Ireland Environment Agency in auditing this information.

The Committee noted, from the response, there is no requirement for UK ETS accredited verifiers to have a physical office in the UK or to be a legal entity registered in the UK.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department regarding clarity on the second part of this sentence, ‘that there is no requirement for UK ETS to be a legal entity registered in the UK’.

5. LCM: Pet Abduction Private Member’s Bill (UK Government) – Briefing from RalSe.

The Chair welcomed the Assembly Research Officer, Mr Mark Allen, to the meeting and invited him to brief the Committee on the LCM: Pet Abduction Private Member’s Bill (UK Government).

The Committee noted the briefing paper from RalSe and the written evidence now received from:

- USPCA;
- Cats Protection;
- Dogs Trust; and
- The Kennel Club.

The Committee noted that an oral briefing from the Department is the next Agenda item on this matter, also that they will be considering the draft Report on the LCM at the end of the meeting.

The Committee noted the LCM Report is to be laid in the Business Office by the end of play, Friday 10 May 2024.

The RalSe Official briefed the Committee and there then followed a question and answer session.

Mr William Irwin MLA joined the meeting at 10.21 am.

6. LCM: Pet Abduction Private Member's Bill (UK Government) – Briefing from the Department.

The Chair welcomed the Departmental Officials to the meeting and invited them to brief the Committee:

- Mr Christopher Andrews, Head of Animal Health & Welfare, EU Legislation, Transition & Policy, DAERA; and
 - Mr Darrin Fullerton, BVD and Animal Identification Branch, DAERA.
- The Committee noted the following papers for the briefing:
- Clerks Memo;
 - Covering letter re Pet Abduction Legislative Consent Memorandum;
 - Draft Legislative Consent Memorandum – Pet Abduction Bill;
 - Pet Abduction Bill; and
 - Pet Abduction Bill – Explanatory Notes.

The Departmental Officials briefed the Committee and there then followed a question and answer session, which included the need for a single access point microchip database for dogs; sentencing in line with animal welfare offences; the lack of mandatory micro-chipping of cats; and concerns around how sheep 'worrying' would be handled under the proposed Bill if a farmer detained a dog.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to consider these additional issues raised when considering the draft Report at the end of the meeting.

The Departmental Officials left the meeting at 10.52 am

7. Departmental Briefing - Update on NI Food Animal Information System (NIFAIS) Project

The Chair welcomed the Departmental Officials to the meeting and invited them to brief the Committee.

- Mr Brian Doherty, Senior Responsible Owner, NIFAIS Project, DAERA;
- Mr Nigel Trimble, Senior Responsible Owner, NIFAIS Project, DAERA; and
- Mr Paul McGurnaghan, Digital Services Director, NIFAIS Project, DAERA.

The Members noted the following paper for the briefing:

- 'Update on NI Food Animal Information System (NIFAIS) Project'

The Departmental Officials briefed the Committee and there then followed a question and answer session. The Committee noted the NIFAIS contract will end June 2025 and that the Department is working towards implementing the second stage of NIFAIS project by this date. The Department stated they have learnt from implementing the first stage of the NIFAIS project specifically the need for effective communication and will be working with UFU regarding rolling out the second stage.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department to have sight of the 'Options Appraisal Paper' that was considered when the decision was taken regarding the decision to end the APHIS system and fund the development of the new NIFAIS project.

Mr Declan McAleer MLA joined the meeting at 11.14 am

The Officials left the meeting at 11.32 am.

8. Departmental Written Briefing - Synopsis of responses to consultation on inshore vessel monitoring systems

The Committee considered the written briefing from the Department dated 1 May 2024, regarding the consultation on 'Inshore Vessel Monitoring Systems' IVMS. The Committee noted DAERA will publish its response to the IVMS consultation and develop a programme of work to implement its IVMS proposals.

The Department is currently developing its new scheme of financial assistance for marine and fisheries under powers in Schedule 6 to the Fisheries Act 2020, with the intent for a package of financial support for IVMS devices to be included

The Committee noted the prohibition on fishing without IVMS will be provided for in a Statutory Rule.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the Department to ask for more information on the financial package and time line for the IVMS.

9. Departmental Written Briefing – Publication of the UK Marine Strategy Programme of Measures by Defra

The Committee considered a written briefing dated 1 May 2024, from the Department regarding the publication of the UK Marine Strategy (UKMS) Programme of Measures (Part Three) by Defra. The UKMS provides a framework for delivering marine policy at a UK level and sets out how clean, healthy, safe, productive and biologically diverse oceans and seas will be achieved and maintained.

The Committee noted that no action is required, but did note this is being brought forward by Lord Benyon, DEFRA Minister of State for Climate, Environment and Energy who has sought agreement of Minister Muir and the other devolved Ministers.

The Committee will be kept updated and invited to participate in further policy discussions as this develops.

Agreed: The Committee were content to note at this stage and to consider an oral briefing at a later stage.

Agreed: The Committee noted they will be speaking to the local fishing industry on this matter; and aim to organise a visit to a local harbour in the near future.

10. Correspondence

Members considered correspondence from the Clerk to the Committee for Communities, dated 19 April 2024, requesting that all Departments considering tackling poverty in their budgets.

Agreed: Members agreed to note.

Members considered correspondence, Eleventh Report of the Examiner of Statutory Rules, dated 30 April 2024. There were no SRs relevant to this Committee.

Agreed: Members agreed to note.

The Chairperson reminded Members that the Committee agreed to take copied correspondence from the House of Lords EU Affairs Sub Committee on the Windsor Framework on a case by case basis and Members can raise any concerns they have.

Members considered copied correspondence from the Chair of the House of Lords, Sub Committee on Windsor Framework to Gareth Davies MP, Exchequer Secretary to the Treasury dated 25 April 2024.

The correspondence is in connection with two EU proposals. 1. Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council Establishing a Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism; and 2. Directive of the European Parliament and of the Council amending Directive 2003/87/EC regarding greenhouse gas emission allowance trading.

Agreed: The Committee were content to note however, agreed to write to Minister Muir on his views of the tone of the letter from Chair of the House of Lords Sub Committee on Windsor Framework.

Members considered correspondence, Twelfth Report of the Examiner of Statutory Rules, dated 3 May 2024. The ESR has considered DAERA S.R. 2024/80: The Packaging Waste (Data Reporting) (No. 2) (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2024 in this report, but has not drawn attention to it.

Agreed: The Committee were content to note.

Members considered correspondence from the Department dated 3rd May 2024 regarding proposals to issue a targeted stakeholder consultation on 'The Hops (Amendment) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2024'.

The eight-week consultation launched week commencing 06 May 2024. The draft Regulations amend the previous regulations 'The Hops Certification Regulations 1979' as they apply here, primarily to provide enforcement powers for updated EU rules on hops certification and hops imports from third countries which are directly applicable in Northern Ireland.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to request an oral briefing from the Department regarding the impact of these new amendments to local industries.

Mr John Blair MLA left the meeting at 11.39 am

Mr John Blair MLA re-joined the meeting at 11.24 am

11. Any Other Business

There were no other items of business.

12. Date, Time and place of next meeting

The next meeting of the Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs Committee is on Thursday 16 May 2024, 10.00 am in Room 21.

The meeting was suspended at 11.45 am

The meeting reconvened at 11.52 am in Private Session.

13. Consideration of draft Committee Report – LCM: Pet Abduction Private Member's Bill (UK Government)

The Committee considered the draft Committee Report pending the additions to be included in the report from the Committee discussions earlier in the meeting in the question and answer sessions with RaISe and the Department.

The meeting went back into Public Session at 12.07 pm

The Committee considered the draft Committee Report LCM: Pet Abduction Private Member's Bill (UK Government) addressing each section as follows:

- Powers & Membership – Agreed
- List of Abbreviations – Agreed
- Background – Agreed
- Committee Consideration of Legislative Consent Memorandum – Agreed
- Committee Meeting - 2 May 2024 – Agreed
- Committee Meeting - 9 May 2024 – Agreed
- Department Briefings – Agreed
- Position in Other Jurisdictions – Agreed
- Responses from Stakeholders – Agreed
- Conclusion – Agreed
- Links to Appendices – Agreed.

The Committee noted the LCM Report is to be laid in the Business Office by end of play, Friday 10 May 2024; and will be debated in the Assembly on 20 May 2024.

Agreed: The Committee agreed the Clerk will make the final amendments to the LCM Report as agreed today.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to support the Minister's Legislative Consent Motion on the Pet Abduction Bill and to recommend that it is approved by the Assembly

The Meeting adjourned at 12.10 pm

Signature:

Tom Elliott, Chairperson

Dated