



Northern Ireland  
Assembly

# Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs Committee

## Minutes of Proceedings

18 April 2024

Room 21, Parliament Buildings

**Present:** Tom Elliott MLA (Chairperson)  
Declan McAleer MLA (Deputy Chairperson)  
John Blair MLA  
Nicola Brogan MLA  
Mr Tom Buchanan MLA  
William Irwin MLA  
Patsy McGlone MLA  
Michelle McIlveen MLA

**Present by Video or Teleconference:**

None

**Apologies:** Áine Murphy MLA

**In Attendance:** Dr Janice Thompson, Assembly Clerk  
Mr James Gilsonan,  
Senior 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 10.08 am***

## **1. Apologies**

As detailed above.

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

2.1 Members noted correspondence from the Renewable Heat Association Ltd requesting to brief the Committee on bioenergy production.

**Agreed:** Members agreed to schedule a briefing from the Renewable Heat Association Ltd.

2.2 The Chairperson informed Members that an informal meeting with Farmers for Action has been scheduled for the 30 April 2024.

**Agreed:** The Committee was content to note.

## **3. Minutes**

Minutes of 11 April 2024 were agreed and signed.

## **4. Matters Arising**

The Chairperson advised the Committee that it had received a response, dated 9 April 2024, from the Department relating to a proposal to amend Regulation (EU) 2017/852 on mercury. DAERA confirms that the impact of the prohibitions and any potential divergence is expected to be minimal.

**Agreed:** The Committee was content to note.

The Chairperson advised the Committee of correspondence from the Clerk to the Committee for Finance with regard to rates applied to the Victoria Square apartments - Land and Property Services now has evidence that allows rates paid on the apartments since they have been empty to be reimbursed, and the properties will not be liable for rates.

Regarding changing the Limitations Order, following a transfer of Functions from DAERA to DfC - the Minister for Finance has now set out the process for this to happen and has confirmed that her department has no legislative role.

**Agreed:** The Committee was content to note.

The Chairperson advised the Committee that it had received legal advice from Assembly Legal Services regarding changing the Limitations Order, following a transfer of Functions from DAERA to DfC.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to note the legal advice but consider it further at the Committee's next meeting.

The Chairperson advised the Committee that it had received a response from the Clerk to the Public Accounts Committee (PAC) informing the Committee that PAC has agreed to place a hold and retain primacy regarding the NI Audit Office Report on Water Quality in Northern Ireland's Rivers and Lakes.

**Agreed:** The Committee was content to note.

The Chairperson advised the Committee that it has received legal advice from Assembly Legal Services regarding the decision taken by DAERA to replace the Ammonia Standing Advice with a case by case basis approach, in the absence of a completed Equality Impact Assessment.

**Agreed:** The Committee was content to note the advice.

***William Irwin MLA joined the Committee at 10.11am***

The Chairperson advised the Committee that it had received a response, dated 17 April 2024, regarding further information on the public inquiry into the Dalradian goldmine proposals and details on the Departments involvement.

**Agreed:** The Committee was content to note.

***The representative from PCI Consulting joined the meeting at 10:14am.***

## **5. Briefing from PCI Consulting regarding Mobuoy Illegal Waste Site**

The Chairperson welcomed the representative to the meeting and invited him to brief the Committee:

- Mr Daniel McAteer, Company Director, PCI Consulting

Mr McAteer briefed the Committee, followed by a question and answer session with Members.

Issues covered included: timeline of events at Mobuoy; alternative remediation options; pollution of River Faughan; the publicly unavailable information relating to the volume and type of waste.

The Chairperson thanked the representative for attending the meeting.

***The representative left the meeting at 10:51am***

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to write to the Department to seek further details relating to the volume and type of waste at Mobuoy and the current position relating to clean up and remediation work and to seek a briefing.

DAERA Officials joined the meeting at 10:57am.

## **6. Briefing from The Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs – Emission Trading Scheme (ETS)**

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

- Ms Jane Corderoy, Director of Climate Change and Green Growth Policy Division;
- Mr Richard Coey, Head of Emissions Trading Policy;
- Ms Anna McMahon, Emissions Trading Policy

The Officials briefed the Committee, followed by a question and answer session with Members.

John Blair MLA left the meeting at 11.19am

John Blair MLA rejoined the meeting at 11.37

Issues covered included: NI's relationship with the EU and UK Schemes; verification and audit of the process; role of the FCA; potential inclusion of waste incineration, domestic maritime activity and agriculture in Schemes; management and availability of allowances; and the Amending Directive and potential impact on NI.

The Chairperson thanked the officials for attending the meeting.

***The officials left the meeting at 11.38am***

***The meeting adjourned until 11.47am***

## **7. Statutory Instrument – The British Wool Marketing Scheme (Amendment) Order 2024**

The Committee considered a letter from the Department concerning the purpose, content and progress of The British Wool Marketing Scheme (Amendment) Order 2024 to be made at Westminster on a UK-wide basis.

The Statutory Instrument will be made on the day the last signature from the devolved institutions is received and will come into force the following day.

Minister Muir has agreed to the co-signing of the Order.

A Member highlighted the Irish Grown Wool Council (IGWC).

**Agreed:** Members agreed to write to the Department to seek clarity on the role of the IGWC in this Statutory Instrument or how the proposals will impact on the role of the IGWC.

## **8. Launch of Public Consultations on a Blue Carbon Action Plan and the Review of the Marine Protected Areas Strategy**

Members noted written briefings from the Department's Marine & Fisheries Division regarding the forthcoming public consultations on a Blue Carbon Action Plan for Northern Ireland and on the Review of the Marine Protected Areas Strategy.

**Agreed:** Member's agreed to receive oral briefings in due course.

## **9. Overview of Proposals to Produce a Statutory Policy Statement on Environmental Principles**

The Committee considered a written briefing from the Department regarding the UK government proposals to produce a Statutory Policy Statement on Environment Principles.

**Agreed:** Members agreed to write to the Department seeking an update into what form this Statutory Policy Statement will take.

## **10. Correspondence.**

10.1 Members noted correspondence from the Department detailing the Pollution Prevention and Control PPC District Councils Charging Scheme NI 2024.

**Agreed:** Members agreed to note the report.

10.2 Members considered the eight Report of the Examiner of Statutory Rules.

**Agreed:** Members agreed to note the report.

10.3 Members considered the ninth Report of the Examiner of Statutory Rules.

**Agreed:** Members agreed to note the report.

10.4 Members noted correspondence from the Department informing the Committee of its intentions to bring forward subordinate legislation regarding the ban on sale and supply of disposable vapes in Northern Ireland.

**Agreed:** Members agreed to note these proposals at this stage and receive an oral briefing in due course.

### **11. Any Other Business**

There were no other items of business.

### **12. Date, Time and place of next meeting**

Due to the strategic planning day being held on 25 April 2024, the next formal meeting of the Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs Committee is on Thursday 2 May 2024, 10.00 am in Room 21.

***The meeting went into closed session at 11.55am***

### **13. Committee planning session – 25 April 2024.**

The Committee considered the proposed agenda for the planning day.

The Meeting adjourned at 12.15 pm

**Signature:** .....

**Tom Elliott, Chairperson**

**Dated** .....