



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs Committee

Minutes of Proceedings

9 March 2026

Meeting location: Room 30 Parliament Buildings, Belfast

Present: Robbie Butler MLA (Chairperson)
Declan McAleer MLA (Deputy Chairperson)
John Blair MLA
Tom Buchanan MLA
Aoife Finnegan MLA
Daniel McCrossan
Michelle McIlveen MLA
Áine Murphy MLA
Gareth Wilson MLA

In Attendance: Dr Janice Thompson, Assembly Clerk
Nick Faulkner, Assistant Assembly Clerk
Michael Greer, Clerical Supervisor
Kyle Lawlor, Clerical Officer

The meeting opened in Public Session at 11:05am

1. Apologies

None.

2. Declaration of Interests

The Chairperson reminded Members of their responsibility to declare any interests in any of the items under discussion.

None were declared.

The Departmental Officials joined the meeting at 11:05am

3. Departmental evidence session- SI 2026/xxx The Greenhouse Gas Emissions Trading Scheme (Amendment) (Extension to Maritime Activities) Order 2026

This agenda item was recorded by Hansard

The Chairperson explained the purpose of the meeting was to take further evidence from DAERA Officials in response to evidence taken from Stena Line and the UK Chamber of Shipping at its meeting of 5 March.

The Committee noted the draft Order has already been approved by the House of Commons, the Scottish Parliament and Senedd Cymru and the House of Lords will be asked to approve it on 12 March, when there is also an associated motion to decline and motion to regret.

The Committee noted that it has been advised that if the Assembly does not approve the order following the Assembly debate on 10 March, the Order in Council for all of the UK cannot be made and the House of Lords Debate will not take place.

The Committee noted its scrutiny to date on the matter.

The following Officials briefed the Committee:

- Ms Jane Corderoy- Director of Climate Change and Green Growth Policy;
- Mr Richard Coey, Deputy Director - Emissions Trading Scheme, Carbon Pricing and Windsor Framework; and

- Mr Joseph Kelly, Deputy Principal, Emissions Trading Scheme Branch.

The Committee heard the importance of the proposed linkage of the UK-ETS and the EU-ETS which Officials stated is dependent on the passage of the Order.

The Committee also heard that meetings with the CBI revealed that concerns focused more on the economic impact arising from the failure to achieve linkage and the impact on costs arising through CBAM, which by 2040 would be estimated to be in the region of £9bn, and would far outweigh any negative impact of the Order.

Officials also highlighted that the 50% partial exemption for NI – GB routes was a major concession achieved by the Minister in negotiation with the UK government and that no such exemption has been given to the Isle of Wight.

In terms of the concessions given to Scotland for 'lifeline' services, Officials advised if ferry services to Rathlin Island and the Strangford Ferry were ever to fall within scope of the Order during any future review, such exemptions would also be sought for Northern Ireland.

A question and answer session followed:

In response to Members concerns that the ETS will operate as a carbon tax Officials pointed out that although the revenues raised would not be used to incentivize decarbonization efforts, other sources of funding are available, such as The Department for Transport's UK SHORE fund, first launched in March 2022, to address maritime emissions.

In response to a request for a delayed or phased introduction, Officials stated that no discussions with the UK took place in that regard and the 2022 Consultation responses did not raise any stakeholder concerns regarding timing and the Department had not been aware of these concerns until now.

The Committee agreed to go into Closed session to clarify its position.

The meeting went into closed session at 11:51am

The meeting resumed in open session at 11:59am

The Chair summarised the discussions that took place during the short, closed session.

The Chair thanked the representatives for their attendance.

The Officials left the meeting at 12:00pm

The Chair put the question to the Committee:

That the Committee for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs has considered the draft Statutory Instrument – the Greenhouse Gas Emissions Trading Scheme (Amendment) (Extension to Maritime Activities) Order 2026 and is content to support the SI as drafted in the debate.

A quorum of Members was present and a vote was taken. The Committee divided:
AYES 5 : NOES 4.

Ayes: Declan McAleer MLA (Deputy Chairperson); John Blair MLA; Aoife Finnegan MLA; Áine Murphy MLA; Daniel McCrossan MLA

Noes: Robbie Butler MLA (Chairperson); Tom Buchanan MLA; Michelle McIlveen MLA; Gareth Wilson MLA.

Agreed: The majority of the Committee Members present agreed to support the draft Statutory Instrument – the Greenhouse Gas Emissions Trading Scheme (Amendment) (Extension to Maritime Activities) Order 2026 as drafted, in the debate in the Assembly.

5. Any Other Business

None

6. Date and Time of Next Meeting

The next meeting will be held on Thursday 12 March at Room 21 Parliament Buildings at 10:00am.

The meeting was adjourned at 12:03pm

Signature:

Robbie Butler MLA, Chairperson

Dated