



Northern Ireland  
Assembly

# Windsor Framework Democratic Scrutiny Committee

## **Minutes of Proceedings**

**22 February 2024**

**Meeting Location:** Room 30

**Present:**

Philip McGuigan MLA (Chairperson)

David Brooks MLA (Deputy Chairperson)

Steve Aiken MLA

Patrick Brown MLA

Jonathan Buckley MLA

Joanne Bunting MLA

Sorcha Eastwood MLA

Declan Kearney MLA

Emma Sheerin MLA

**Present by Video:**

None.

**Apologies:**

None.

**In Attendance:**

Ms Marie Austin (Assembly Clerk)

Ms Jessica Jacques (Assistant Clerk)

Mr Oliver Bellew (Assistant Clerk)

Ms Marion Johnson (Assistant Clerk)

**In Attendance by Video:**

Ms Leigh Gibson (Senior Assistant Clerk)

The meeting commenced at 10:02 a.m. in public session.

**1. Apologies**

There were no apologies.

The Chairperson referred to a notification, in relation to a new EU act on geographical indication protection for craft and industrial products, which was received and circulated to Members on 21 February 2024. The Chairperson reminded Members that it is not a function of the Committee to agree, or not agree, that a new EU act should be added to the Windsor Framework as that is a matter for the Assembly on foot of an applicability motion.

## **2. Draft Minutes**

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed the minutes of the meeting held on Thursday 15 February 2024.

## **3. Matters Arising**

### Briefing on Dual Divergence

The Committee considered three academics who had been identified as having written extensively on the issue of dual divergence: Professor David Phinnemore, School of Anthropology, Philosophy and Politics, Queens University, Belfast; Dr Lisa Claire Whitten, Research Fellow, School of Anthropology, Philosophy and Politics, Queens University, Belfast; and, Joël Reland, Research Associate, UK in a Changing Europe.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to invite the academics to brief the Committee at its meeting on 29 February 2024.

### Committee Educational Visits

The Chairperson informed Members that the Clerk is working with the EU Affairs Manager to develop a programme of educational visits and meetings to help inform the Committee in carrying out its statutory functions. The draft programme will be brought to the Committee for consideration in due course.

## **4. COM/2024/52: Field inspections and seed productions - Moldova and Ukraine**

The Committee considered a notification received in relation to a proposed replacement EU Act – COM/2024/52: Field inspections and seed productions - Moldova and Ukraine.

The Committee noted that the proposal aims to grant equivalence with EU requirements for seed of fodder plants produced in the Republic of Moldova and officially certified by its authorities; and for seed of beet, sunflower, and swede rape produced in Ukraine and officially certified by its authorities. This will make

it possible to import seed of those species from Moldova and Ukraine into the EU.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to request legal advice and an initial departmental assessment of impact to help inform its decision on whether to monitor the proposed EU Act.

## **5. The Role of the Executive Office in assisting the Windsor Framework Democratic Scrutiny Committee**

The following officials from the Executive Office joined the meeting at 10.15am:

Aodhán Connolly	Director, Office of the Northern Ireland Executive in Brussels
Tom Reid	Deputy Secretary, Inter-government and International Relations, Executive Office
Anthony Miller	Director, Post EU Exit Co-ordination Group, Executive Office.

The officials briefed the Committee on the role of the Executive Office in assisting the Committee in carrying out its statutory functions.

The briefing was followed by a question and answer session.

The officials agreed to provide information on a range of issues raised during the briefing.

The Chairperson thanked the officials for their attendance.

The officials left the meeting at 10.52am.

## **6. The Role of the Assembly Research and Information Service in assisting the Windsor Framework Democratic Scrutiny Committee**

The following official from the Assembly Research and Information Service (RaISe) joined the meeting at 10.53am:

Tim Moore	Senior Researcher, Assembly Research and Information Service.
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The official briefed the Committee on the role of RalSe in assisting the Committee in carrying out its statutory functions.

The briefing was followed by a question and answer session.

The Chairperson thanked the official for his attendance.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to write to the Chief Executive of the Northern Ireland Assembly for information on the Assembly resources available to support the work of the Committee.

The official left the meeting at 11.16am.

## **7. EU Legislative Processes and the EU Document Scrutiny Process at the House of Commons and House of Lords**

The EU Affairs Manager joined the meeting at 11.18am:

Shauna Mageean EU Affairs Manager, Northern Ireland Assembly

The official briefed the Committee on EU legislative processes, and the EU document scrutiny process at the House of Commons and House of Lords.

The briefing was followed by a question and answer session.

The Chairperson thanked the official for her attendance.

The official left the meeting at 11.36am.

## **8. Correspondence**

The Chairperson outlined the Committee's statutory role in relation to the application of EU law as it develops and the boundaries in relation to the work of statutory committees.

**8.1.** The Committee considered correspondence from Dr Steve Aiken on issues relating to the work of the Committee.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to publish the correspondence on the Committee webpage.

**8.2** The Committee considered correspondence between the House of Lords EU Sub-Committee and the Minister of State for Food, Farming and Fisheries, regarding a proposed regulation on plants obtained by certain new genomic techniques.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed that the Clerk should contact the Executive Office to confirm that this proposed regulation will be included in the Executive Office briefing scheduled for 7 March.

**8.3** The Committee considered correspondence between the House of Lords EU Sub-Committee and the Minister for Biosecurity, Animal Health and Welfare, regarding an EU Delegated Regulation on rules for non-commercial movements of pet birds into a Member State from a territory or a third country.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to send a copy of this letter to the Minister for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs and to the Committee for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs, for information.

**8.4** The Committee considered correspondence from the House of Lords EU Sub-Committee on its inquiry into veterinary medicines and the Windsor Framework.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to send a copy of the letter to the Minister for Health; Committee for Health; Minister for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs; and the Committee for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs, for information.

**8.5** The Committee considered correspondence between the House of Lords EU Sub-Committee and the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs, regarding organic egg production.

The Chairperson declared an interest in that a family member is involved in the poultry industry.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to send a copy of the letter to the Minister for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs, and the Committee for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs, for information.

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**8.6** The Committee considered correspondence from the Human Rights Consortium, welcoming the appointment of the Committee, and requesting that it be added to the list of Committee consultees.

**Agreed:** The Committee agreed to provide the Human Rights Consortium with details of its agreed engagement procedures and advise that any requests for views will be publicised widely.

**8.7** The Committee noted correspondence from the Clerk to the Committee for the Executive Office, enclosing a copy of the Executive Office's First Day Brief.

## **9. Any Other Business**

No other business was raised.

## **10. Date, Time and Place of Next Meeting**

The next meeting will be held on Thursday 29 February 2024 at 10:00 a.m. in Room 30, Parliament Buildings.

The meeting was adjourned at 11.50am.

**Philip McGuigan, MLA**

**Chairperson, Windsor Framework Democratic Scrutiny Committee**