



Northern Ireland
Assembly

Windsor Framework Democratic Scrutiny Committee

Minutes of Proceedings

12 March 2026

Meeting Location: Room 30

Present:

Ciara Ferguson MLA (Chairperson)

David Brooks MLA (Deputy Chairperson)

Cathal Boylan MLA

Jonathan Buckley MLA

Peter Martin MLA

Present by Video or Teleconference:

Pádraig Delargy MLA

Kate Nicholl MLA

Apologies:

Steve Aiken MLA

In Attendance:

Marie Austin, Clerk

Chris Dickison, Senior Assistant Clerk

Jessica Jacques, Senior Assistant Clerk

Sean McCann, Assistant Clerk

Lisa Chestnutt, Clerical Supervisor

Damien Brown, Clerical Officer

In Attendance by Video or Teleconference:

Oliver Bellew, Assistant Clerk

Carla Campbell, Clerical Supervisor

Shelley Garner, Clerical Officer

The meeting commenced at 10.01am in closed session.

The Chairperson welcomed Pádraig Delargy MLA to his first meeting of the Committee.

1. Apologies

As above.

2. Declaration of Interests

None.

3. Regulation (EU) 2026/405 on detergents and surfactants, and repealing Regulation (EC) No 648/2004 - Legal Advice

Caroline Byers, Legal Adviser, Assembly Legal Services, joined the meeting at 10.03am.

The Committee considered a notification from the Cabinet Office in relation to the following published replacement EU act:

Regulation (EU) 2026/405 on detergents and surfactants, and repealing Regulation (EC) No 648/2004.

The Legal Adviser provided advice on whether it appears likely that the published replacement act differs significantly (in whole or in part) from the content or scope of the EU act it is amending/replacing.

The Committee noted that further consideration of the published replacement EU act would take place in public session.

The Legal Adviser left the meeting at 10.15am.

The Committee moved into public session at 10.15am.

4. Draft Minutes

Agreed: The Committee agreed the minutes of the meeting held on 5 March 2026.

5. Matters Arising

None.

6. Regulation (EU) 2026/405 on detergents and surfactants, and repealing Regulation (EC) No 648/2004 – Departmental Oral Evidence

The Committee continued its consideration of Regulation (EU) 2026/405 on detergents and surfactants, and repealing Regulation (EC) No 648/2004.

The Committee considered an assessment of impact from the Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs, and an Explanatory Memorandum from the UK Government on the published replacement EU act.

The following official joined the meeting at 10.17am:

Colin Armstrong

Deputy Director, Water and Marine Policy and
Legislation, Department of Agriculture, Environment
and Rural Affairs

The official gave oral evidence on the published replacement EU act.

A question and answer session followed.

The evidence session was reported by Hansard.

The official left the meeting at 10.51am.

The Committee noted that, in order to meet its statutory requirements, it must decide whether or not to hold an inquiry into the published replacement EU act.

The Committee had regard to:

(i) the legal advice on whether it appears likely that the replacement act significantly differs (in whole or in part) from the content or scope of the EU instrument which it amends or replaces, and

(ii) the departmental assessment on whether it appears likely that the replacement act would have a significant impact specific to everyday life of communities in Northern Ireland in a way that is liable to persist.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to hold an inquiry into the published replacement EU act, pursuant to paragraph 8(1) of Schedule 6B to the Northern Ireland Act 1998.

The Committee noted that its decision will be published on the Committee webpage.

The Committee considered a draft inquiry timetable.

Agreed: The Committee agreed the inquiry timetable.

The Committee noted that, in line with agreed procedures, a Citizen Space survey would launch to seek views on the impact of the replacement EU act from the key representatives of businesses and civil society, identified by RaISe. The survey will be promoted widely and will be open to anyone to respond.

The Committee considered a short, focussed list of key representatives of businesses and civil society, identified by RaISe, who are affected by the EU act, or who would be affected if the act enters into force.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write directly to the identified key representatives of businesses and civil society to seek their views on the impact of the replacement EU act.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to seek the views of the Northern Ireland Chemicals Stakeholder Forum on the impact of the replacement EU act.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to request that the Department of Agriculture, Environment, and Rural Affairs provides written answers to a series of questions on the replacement EU act, and that officials address these answers during the oral evidence session scheduled for the next Committee meeting.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the UK Government to seek its views on the impact of the replacement EU act, and to ascertain the position in England, Scotland and Wales.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to write to the UK Government to ask whether it is committed to aligning with the replacement EU Act within the relevant 42-month transition period, or whether there may be divergence for a period of time.

7. COM/2023/769 Proposal for a Regulation on the welfare of dogs and cats and their traceability - Consideration of Survey Responses

The Committee considered five responses received to its public consultation on the proposed EU act COM/2023/769 Proposal for a Regulation on the welfare of dogs and cats and their traceability.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to forward the responses to the UK Government and the Committee for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs for consideration.

Agreed: The Committee agreed to publish the responses on its website.

8. Committee Work Planning

The Committee noted an update on all the proposed EU acts which it is monitoring and gathering evidence on, and on others which had been notified.

9. Correspondence

- 9.1 The Committee noted an update from RaISe on COM/2025/503 Proposal for a Directive and COM/2025/504 Proposal for a Regulation as regards digitalisation and common specifications.
- 9.2 The Committee noted a copy of correspondence from the House of Lords Northern Ireland Scrutiny Committee to the UK Government regarding COM/2025/823 Proposal for a Directive as regards transfers of defence related products and security and defence procurement.
- 9.3 The Committee noted a copy of correspondence from the House of Lords Northern Ireland Scrutiny Committee to the UK Government regarding a Commission Delegated Regulation as regards the persistent organic pollutants tetrabromodiphenyl ether, pentabromodiphenyl ether, hexabromodiphenyl ether, heptabromodiphenyl ether and decabromodiphenyl ether.
- 9.4 The Committee noted a copy of correspondence from the House of Lords Northern Ireland Scrutiny Committee to the UK Government regarding its Inquiry on Strengthening Northern Ireland's voice in the context of the Windsor Framework.

10. Chairperson's Business

The Chairperson informed Members that, as agreed by the Committee, both she and the Deputy Chairperson met with Senator Mark Daly, Cathaoirleach of the Seanad and Chair of the Seanad Select Committee on EU Scrutiny and Transparency, on 5 March 2026 to discuss the work of the respective Committees. The Committee noted a written summary of the meeting.

The Chairperson informed Members that the agreed meeting with the Head of the European Parliament Liaison Office for the UK would take place on 25 March 2026, and asked Members to advise the Secretariat of their availability to attend.

11. Any Other Business

None.

12. Date, Time and Place of the next meeting

The next meeting will be held on 19 March 2026 at 10am in Room 30.

The meeting was adjourned at 11.03am.

Ciara Ferguson MLA

Chairperson, Windsor Framework Democratic Scrutiny Committee

19 March 2026