

Northern Ireland Assembly News – March 2022

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Speaker's Business

[End of Mandate](#) – As 22nd March was the last normal sitting day of the mandate, the Speaker took the opportunity along with others to make some brief remarks to mark the end of the Assembly mandate.

Executive Committee Business

[Climate Change \(No. 2\) Bill: Further Consideration Stage \(1st March\)](#)

[Climate Change \(No. 2\) Bill: Final Stage \(9th March\)](#) - The Climate Change (No. 2) Bill passed its final stage. Key components of the Bill will include: A net zero target for GHG emissions, preferably by 2045 or earlier but no later than 2050; A requirement for Climate Action Plans and carbon budgets for all sectors; A mechanism for independent NI based scrutiny through a Climate office and Climate Commissioner; and Provision for a just transition to help support sectors move to net zero.

[Draft Greenhouse Gas Emissions Trading Scheme \(Amendment\) Order 2022](#) – Members debated and approved the Order which will make various technical operational amendments to the UK Emissions Trading Scheme. They will not impact on N's electricity generating installations, which continue to participate in the EU scheme under the terms of the Northern Ireland protocol.

[Energy Performance of Buildings \(Certificates & Inspections\) \(Amendment\) Regulations \(NI\) 2022](#) – Members approved the draft regulations which reduce the statutory fees that are charged when data is registered on the energy performance of buildings register, particularly in relation to energy performance certificates (EPCs), display energy certificates and air conditioning inspection reports for properties.

Ministerial Statements

[Future Agricultural Policy Decisions for Northern Ireland](#) – The AERA Minister took opportunity to make a statement to the Assembly on his decisions regarding future agricultural policy for Northern Ireland.

[Bovine Tuberculosis in Northern Ireland](#) – The AERA Minister delivered a statement on his decisions on the way forward for a new strategy to eradicate bovine tuberculosis from NI including his intention to introduce a programme of badger intervention in areas of high TB incidence, initially through a cull of badgers.

[Environment Strategy](#) – The AERA Minister made a statement on Northern Ireland's first overarching environment strategy. *The strategy sets out six strategic environmental outcomes that encompass the main environmental, these outcomes are: excellent air, water, land and neighbourhood quality; a healthy and accessible environment and landscapes that everyone can connect with and enjoy; thriving, resilient and connected nature and wildlife; sustainable production and consumption on land and at sea; zero waste and a highly developed circular economy; and net zero greenhouse gas emissions and improved climate resilience and adaptability.*

Committee Business

[Budget 2022-25: Committee for Finance and Northern Ireland Fiscal Council Reports](#) - Speaking on behalf of the AERA Committee during the debate, the Committee Chair stated that several major resource pressures are anticipated including an approximate deficit of £6 million per annum against the environment fund and strategic environment fund that will inevitably delay the progress of initiatives such as the environment and peatland strategies and climate change plans.

Members Statements

Private Members' Business

Adjournment Debate

Answers to Written Questions

Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs

[Success of woodland scheme under forestry services Pillar 2 \(2014-2020\)](#)

[Update - work to ensure migratory fish are not impeded in reaching their spawning sites](#)

[Up-to-date ammonia guidance and process planning applications](#)

[Protection of Northern Ireland's blue carbon habitats](#)

[Planning application response times for renewable energy](#)

[Effectiveness of the duty on district councils to review of air quality](#)

[Encouragement of rewilding projects](#)

[Benefits of forestry and woodland to the agriculture sector](#)

[Update on the Mobuoy Remediation Project](#)

[Independent Northern Ireland environment agency](#)

Minister for Communities

[Housing Executive's costs in dealing with fly-tipping](#)

Minister for the Economy

[Anaerobic Digestion plants and projected decarbonisation scenarios](#)

[Departmental steps to reduce its carbon footprint](#)

Minister for Infrastructure

[Plans for the implementation of Climate Change \(No. 2\) Bill and active travel spend](#)

[Update - plans for the implementation of a greenways strategy for NI](#)

[Implementation of the Energy Strategy](#)

[Assessment of review of the Planning Act \(NI\) 2011](#)

Oral Answers to Questions

Assembly Commission

[Parliament Buildings: Rewilding](#)

[MLA Pension Scheme: Fossil Fuel Companies](#)

[Parliament Buildings: Annual Energy Cost](#)

Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs

[Pilot catchment sensitive schemes to address water and air quality issues](#)

[Schools: Biodiversity Programmes](#)

[Update - Independent Strategic Review of the Northern Ireland Agri-food Sector](#)

Minister of Finance

[Update - Shared Prosperity Fund](#)

[Net Zero Targets: Funding](#)

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Assembly Committee Meetings March 2022		
COMMITTEE	DATE	AGENDA
AERA	3 March Watch Again	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Committee received an Oral Briefing from the Rural Development Network regarding the Rural Development Programme LEADER Structures. • The Committee also received an Oral Briefing from DAERA about Capacity Constraints in the Planning Process.
	10 March Watch Again	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Committee received an Oral Briefing from DAERA about the Future Agriculture Policy Consultation Responses and Written Briefings from DAERA regarding an update on the 2021-22 Business Plan and the Consultation on Proposals for Inshore Vessel Monitoring System for Fishing Vessels Under 12m Overall Length. • The Committee received an Oral Briefing from RaSe on Common Frameworks.
	16 March Watch Again	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Committee took Oral Evidence on the Organic Production Provisional Common Framework. • The Committee received an Oral Briefing from the review team on the findings and recommendations in the Kendall Report – Independent Strategic Review of Agri-Food Industry.
	24 March Watch Again	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Committee received Oral Briefings from DAERA including an update on work streams for the Environment Strategy, Bovine TB Eradication Strategy Proposals and the Agri-Food and Biosciences Institute's Work on Carbon Sequestration.
Economy	2 March Watch Again	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Committee received briefings from: Onshore Fracking (Prohibition) Bill – Bill Sponsor Briefing, Onshore Fracking (Prohibition) Bill Briefing from Geological Survey Northern Ireland on the Onshore Fracking (Prohibition) Bill Briefing from Invest NI
	23 rd March Watch Again	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Committee received a briefing from the Utility Regulator
Infrastructure	16 March Watch Again	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Committee received an update on issues facing the freight/haulage sector and received a Departmental briefing on the Renewable & Low Carbon Energy review.
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