

## Northern Ireland Assembly News – May 2024

### Assembly Business

None This Month

### Executive Committee Business

#### [Budget 2024-25](#)

The Assembly approved the programme of expenditure proposals for 2024-25 as announced by the Minister of Finance on 25 April 2024 and set out in the Budget document laid before the Assembly on 20 May 2024. Speaking in the debate the Chairperson of the Committee for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs stated that the Committee had limited opportunity to scrutinise the DAERA budget. The Committee held a meeting with Minister Muir to hear his priorities and discuss the budget pressures. Committee concerns included tackling bovine TB, implementing the Windsor framework, rural development funding and climate action. The Committee is still waiting to see the draft, costed climate action plan and environmental improvement plan. The Committee expect to see funding prioritised for that, along with the necessary science and innovation.

### Ministerial Statements

#### [The Executive legislation Programme 2024](#)

The Executive Committee agreed a programme of legislation which, subject to its further agreement to the content of individual Bills, Ministers intend to introduce in the Assembly during the calendar year 2024. The Minister for Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs' legislative plans focus on dilapidated buildings and altering provisions relating to EU food legacy. The Minister for Infrastructure will introduce a Water, Flooding and Sustainable Drainage Bill to provide new and additional powers across seven areas of water, flooding and drainage legislation.

#### [Farm Support and Development Programme](#)

The Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs made a statement to the Assembly on the farm support and development programme stating that his vision for the time ahead aligns closely with the farm support and development programme and is to ensure both economic and environmental sustainability. He added that, *Achieving improved environmental sustainability is paramount. I want to move to address ammonia- and phosphorus-related issues by incentivising and enabling actions that protect and enhance our natural and marine environment so that we can achieve better guardianship of water and air quality, soil health and biodiversity. An environmentally sustainable agri-food industry will also provide a key part of the jigsaw to secure the recovery of Lough Neagh and improve water quality across Northern Ireland.*

### Opposition Business

#### [Independent Environmental Protection Agency](#)

Members debated a motion introduced by Patsy McGlone and Resolved: *That this Assembly declares an ecological and biodiversity crisis; acknowledges the complex characteristics of biodiversity and ecological breakdown in Lough Neagh, which includes high concentrations of phosphates and nitrates from agricultural run-off, the durability of the waste water infrastructure, the impact of invasive species and the catalyst of higher temperatures caused by the climate crisis; notes the resolution of the Assembly to address management of the lough; and calls on the Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs to address the ecological crisis by bringing forward legislation to establish an independent environmental protection agency by the end of this Assembly mandate.* An amendment tabled by Mr Tom Elliott that *after "bringing forward" insert: "a review of environmental governance, including potential"* was defeated by 28 votes to 41.

### Committee Business

None This Month

### Private Members' Business

None This Month

## Adjournment Debate

None this Month

## Member Statements

[World Bee Day](#)

[Pollution: Six Mile Water River](#)

## Answers to Written Questions

### Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs

[Meet deadline - publish climate action plan before the Assembly by 6 June 2024](#)

[Plans to introduce carbon audits for farms](#)

[DAERA budget for NIEA over last 3 years](#)

[DAERA funding provided for the Office for Environmental Protection](#)

[Update - Consultation on the Northern Ireland Food Strategy Framework](#)

[DAERA's work to monitor river water quality and prosecution of the polluters](#)

[Implications of the Budget 2024-25 on DAERA's ability to support decarbonisation initiatives](#)

[Support for arable farmers through Farming for Nature Package to contribute to NI's climate goals](#)

[Response times by Natural Environment Division to wind farm applications](#)

[Spread of zebra mussels and their relationship with trout-stocking](#)

[Migratory fish impeded from reaching spawning sites](#)

[Introduction of real-time water quality reports](#)

### Minister for Communities

[Funding allocated to energy efficiency schemes in last five years](#)

### Minister for the Economy

[Costed Tourism Action Plan](#)

[Grants for the installation of green energy alternatives, such as anaerobic digestion](#)

[Engagement with the retail sector on achieving a net zero future](#)

[Update - Tourism Action Plan](#)

### Minister of Education

[Climate Change and Sustainability Education in the school curriculum](#)

[Healthy Food for Healthy Outcomes food in schools policy](#)

### Minister of Finance

[Bringing forward social value legislation](#)

[Number of vacancies across the civil service, broken down by department](#)

### Minister for Infrastructure

[Decision not to intervene in the expansion of the Cloghan Point oil terminal](#)

[Wildflower planting scheme for road verges to promote biodiversity and reduce costs](#)

[Plans to increase NI water budget to reduce the 20m tonnes of wastewater spilling into public waterways each year](#)

[Planning system and statutory requirement to achieve 80% renewable electricity by 2030](#)

[Departmental spend on planting and maintaining trees](#)

[GIS map showing locations of all Tree Preservation Orders and conservation areas](#)

[NI Waters Combined Storm Overflows in breach of legal limits](#)

[Spend on the greenways strategy, broken down by constituency, for the last five years](#)

[Delivery of the Belfast Cycling Network Delivery Plan 2022-31](#)

## Oral Answers to Questions

### Minister of Agriculture, Environment & Rural Affairs

[Family Farming: Sustainability](#)

[Environmental Complaints](#)

<p><a href="#">Deposit Return Scheme</a></p> <p><a href="#">Reduction of Household Waste</a></p> <p><b>Minister of Finance</b></p> <p><a href="#">Flooding: Financial Support for Farmers</a></p> <p><a href="#">How Budget allocations reflect the Executive’s priority to protect and better manage Lough Neagh</a></p> <p><a href="#">Departmental responsibilities in relation to meeting climate change targets</a></p> <p><b>Minister for Infrastructure</b></p> <p><a href="#">Park-and-ride Strategy</a></p>
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<b>Assembly Committee Meetings May 2024</b>		
COMMITTEE	DATE	AGENDA/ Highlights
<b>AERA</b>	2 May <a href="#">Watch Again</a>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Departmental Briefing - Circular Economy - Rethinking Resources</li> </ul>
	16 May <a href="#">Watch Again</a>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Briefing from The Nature Friendly Farming Network - Delivering a sustainable agricultural sector</li> </ul>
	23 May <a href="#">Watch Again</a>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Oral Briefing from DAERA – Overview of new Farm Sustainability Payment Scheme including SL1 for 2025 Scheme year</li> <li>• Oral Briefing from DAERA – Carbon Foot printing Project.</li> </ul>
	30 May <a href="#">Watch Again</a>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Briefing from DAERA - Marine Plan for Northern Ireland Update on Draft Policies Public</li> <li>• Discussion on Departmental Written Briefing - Northern Ireland Food Strategy Framework Overview</li> </ul>
<b>Economy</b>	8 May <a href="#">Watch Again</a>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Oral evidence from the System Operator for NI on net zero and electricity grid issues.</li> <li>• Oral evidence from the NI Authority for Utility Regulation on its current role and the challenges of the Department’s Energy Strategy.</li> </ul>
	15 May <a href="#">Watch Again</a>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Oral evidence from the Department on the Tourism Strategy and 10 year action plan.</li> </ul>
<b>Education</b>	1 May <a href="#">Watch Again</a>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Briefing from representatives of the NI Forest School Association.</li> </ul>
<b>Infrastructure</b>	15 May <a href="#">Watch Again</a>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Briefing - Role of Department for Infrastructure Rivers</li> <li>• Planning System matters – SPPS on Climate Change; regional strategic planning policy on Renewable and Low Carbon Energy</li> </ul>

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