

## Northern Ireland Assembly News – June 2024

### Assembly Business

None This Month

### Executive Committee Business

#### [Executive Legislation Programme 2024](#)

The Minister for the Economy will introduce legislation relating to his Department's financial powers, legislation to provide a new function for the Utility Regulator and legislation to make provision for the renewable heat incentive (RHI) scheme. A Utility Regulator decarbonisation powers Bill will provide the Utility Regulator with a new function to enable it to support the Department for the Economy in the delivery of the Executive's energy strategy and targets under the Climate Change Act 2022. An RHI scheme Bill will make provision for the future of the scheme. The Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs will focus his legislative plans on dilapidated buildings and altering provisions relating to EU food legacy. A dilapidation Bill will confer functions on councils to provide them with a modern, fit-for-purpose regime to tackle dilapidated and often dangerous buildings and sites. In addition, the Minister proposes to introduce an agriculture Bill to provide powers to allow the Department to transition from or end the legacy EU fruit and vegetable aid scheme and EU agri-food information and promotion scheme as they apply locally. 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.

#### [Fisheries Act 2020 \(Scheme for Financial Assistance\) Regulations \(Northern Ireland\) 2024](#)

Members voted that *the draft Fisheries Act 2020 (Scheme for Financial Assistance) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2024 be approved*. This statutory rule will provide the long-term legal basis for the payment of grants by my Department to Northern Ireland marine, fisheries - including inland fisheries - seafood and aquaculture stakeholders. Approval of the statutory rule will enable £3.4 million of funding to be provided to stakeholders in the current financial year. The £3.4 million consists of £1.9 million replacement EU funding from Treasury, £0.5 million of green growth funding for fisheries, and £1 million green growth funding for blue carbon and marine recovery initiatives. For 2024-25, DAERA will offer grant support under the following themes: investments on board fishing vessels and training; fisheries innovation, science and partnerships; environment and conservation action; blue carbon restoration; development of Northern Ireland's aquaculture; the processing and marketing of fish and aquaculture produce; and fishing port infrastructure.

### Ministerial Statements

[North/South Ministerial Council: Agriculture](#)

[North/South Ministerial Council: Environment](#)

[North/South Ministerial Council: Aquaculture and Marine](#)

### Opposition Business

None This Month

### Committee Business

None This Month

### Private Members' Business

#### [Energy Market](#)

The Assembly debated and passed a motion by [David Honeyford MLA](#) and amended by [Sinead McLaughlin MLA](#): *That this Assembly recognises the cost-of-living crisis is exacerbated by the cost of energy; further recognises that this constitutes the direct cost of a reliance on fossil fuels in an increasingly unstable world; endorses the concept of energy transition proofing for all public policy and legislation, including development rights for green infrastructure; acknowledges the value of constructing and retrofitting houses and offices, prioritising renewable energy sources; and calls on the Minister for the Economy urgently to introduce the necessary legislation emerging from the current energy strategy, including to alter the terms of the Utility Regulator to incorporate oil within*

*its role and to carry out its functions with due regard to the need to meet net zero targets, and further calls on the Minister to work with the Minister for Communities to agree a large-scale social housing retrofit programme to reduce domestic fossil fuel consumption and increase energy efficiency, starting with communities in highest disadvantage, and to make a statement to the Assembly on the progress of this programme within six months.*

#### [On-farm Investment](#)

Members debate a motion proposed by [Michelle McIlveen MLA](#): *That this Assembly believes that investment in new and replacement farm buildings is essential to improving agriculture's environmental footprint in Northern Ireland; criticises the decision to drop the published ammonia standing advice used by the Northern Ireland Environment Agency (NIEA) to assess the air quality impacts associated with many planning applications; recalls that this decision was made without ministerial approval or prior consultation; notes with concern recent research conducted by KPMG on behalf of the Northern Ireland agri-food industry, which found that more stringent ammonia regulation could lead to fewer successful planning applications, a 20% to 25% decline in on-farm investment and reduce family farm incomes by up to 38% in some sectors; calls on the Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs to acknowledge that the investment in, and modernisation of, farm facilities will promote animal welfare and reduce future emissions; further calls on the Minister to reject policies that constrain plans to invest in and modernise farm facilities; and calls on the Minister to place the needs of primary producers and consultation with the agri-food industry at the forefront of any new ammonia strategy.* The motion was passed by 50 votes to 18.

### **Adjournment Debate**

None this Month

### **Member Statements**

[River Roe Fish Kill](#)

[No Gas Caverns Campaign](#)

[Lough Neagh: Ownership](#)

[Lough Neagh: Public Ownership](#)

### **Answers to Written Questions**

#### **Minister of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs**

[Engagement and actions DAERA has taken in relation to protecting marine ecosystems](#)

[Overhaul of environmental governance and enforcement](#)

[Update - actions taken to address water quality in rivers, lakes and loughs](#)

[Assessment of the impact that intensive poultry production has on rivers](#)

[Level of water quality monitoring routinely conducts at Lough Neagh](#)

[Support available for groups seeking to establish community gardens and vegetable allotments](#)

[Update - test and vaccinate or remove scheme as a method of removing bovine TB from the wildlife](#)

[Steps to improve recycling infrastructure and reduce plastic waste exports](#)

[Progress made since the Climate Change Act \(NI\) 2022 was established](#)

[Illegally buried waste on agricultural land.](#)

[Waste exported from Northern Ireland for \(i\) incineration; \(ii\) recycling; and \(iii\) disposal](#)

[Impact of intensive poultry production on rivers and waterways across the UK and Ireland](#)

[Forests for our Future](#)

#### **Minister for Communities**

[Support for grassroots sports clubs to become environmentally sustainable](#)

#### **Minister for the Economy**

[Support for onshore and offshore wind energy](#)

[Amount of funding allocated to support decarbonisation strategies](#)

[Amalgamation of the Causeway Coastal Route and the Wild Atlantic Way](#)

[Making going green more affordable for homes in Northern Ireland](#)

#### **Minister of Health**

[Number of wild fires in the countryside or green spaces that the Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue Service has been called to in each of the last four years; and the costs associated](#)

**Minister for Infrastructure**

[Support for development of green infrastructure, such as urban green spaces](#)  
[Number of Event Duration Monitors installed at Combined Sewer Overflows across NI Water’s wastewater network; and \(ii\) the percentage of the network covered by Event Duration Monitors, broken down by \(a\) River Basin Districts; and \(b\) Local Management Areas.](#)  
[Competence and capacity in the area of Environmental Impact Assessments](#)  
[Stricter sanctions for breaches of planning laws](#)  
[Number of children who walk or cycle to school](#)  
[Update - Bicycle Strategy](#)  
[Research on a biodiversity net gain scheme](#)  
[Plans to address the 20 million tonnes of untreated sewage and wastewater spilled into NI's waterways annually](#)  
[Space for bicycles on public transport](#)

**Oral Answers to Questions**

**Minister of Agriculture, Environment & Rural Affairs**

[Mobuoy Dump: Remediation Strategy](#)  
[Lough Neagh: NIEA Powers](#)  
[Littering](#)  
[Lough Neagh: Blue-green Algae](#)

**Minister for the Economy**

[Energy Efficiency Capital Grant](#)  
[Climate Change Targets – Assistance for Businesses](#)

**Minister of Finance**

[Social Value Policies](#)

**Assembly Committee Meetings May 2024**

COMMITTEE	DATE	AGENDA/ Highlights
<b>AERA</b>	6 June <a href="#">Watch Again</a>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Briefing from the Minister – Update on current issues</li> <li>• Budget 2024-25 – Briefing from the Department</li> <li>• Briefing from The NI Fish Producers’ Organisation (NIFPO) on a Potential solution to Lough Neagh.</li> </ul>
	13 June <a href="#">Watch Again</a>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Briefing from The Northern Ireland Environment Agency - Update on Ammonia Planning Applications</li> </ul>
	27 June <a href="#">Watch Again</a>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Briefing from Anglo-North Irish Fish Producers Organisation (ANIFPO) &amp; The Northern Ireland Fish Producers’ Organisation Ltd (NIFPO) - Update on issues</li> <li>• DAERA Briefing - Fisheries Management Plans (i) Irish Sea Pelagic (ii) Irish Sea Demersal (iii) NI Inshore</li> <li>• Departmental Written Briefing - Update on the Implementation of the Climate Change Act 2022</li> </ul>
<b>Economy</b>	12 June <a href="#">Watch Again</a>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Onshore Petroleum Licensing Policy - Oral evidence from the Department for the Economy</li> </ul>
	26 June <a href="#">Watch Again</a>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Briefing from the Minister for the Economy on his policy priorities, business plan, budgetary challenges and legislative programme for this mandate.</li> <li>• Written Departmental briefing on the Utility Regulator Preparation for Decarbonisation Bill consultation.</li> </ul>
<b>Infrastructure</b>	12 June	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Committee received oral evidence from Sustrans</li> </ul>

	<a href="#">Watch Again</a>	and the Department on Active Travel.
	26 June <a href="#">Watch Again</a>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Committee received oral evidence from RenewableNI, ABO Energy and Renewable Energy Systems on Renewable Energy</li> <li>• Written briefing from the Department on 2023-24   End   Year Monitoring Plan.</li> </ul>

[Back to Top](#)