



OFFICIAL DAERA MINUTES

MEETING TITLE	Finance and Major Projects Committee (FMPC)	
DIVISION/BRANCH REFERENCE	FMPC 32/25a	
VENUE	Clare House and *MS Teams	
DATE/TIME	13 November 2025 10.00am	
LIST OF ATTENDEES	<p>FMPC MEMBERS Mark O'Donnell Fiona McCandless* Julie Thompson Roger Downey</p> <p>OTHERS IN ATTENDANCE Declan McCarney Nuala Hennessy Melvyn McCurdy Gemma Robinson* Beverley Bhatia</p>	<p>Deputy Secretary, Strategic Planning & Corporate Services Group (Chair) Deputy Secretary, Estates Transformation & Windsor Framework Implementation Group Deputy Secretary, Environment, Marine & Fisheries Group Finance Director</p> <p>Deputy Finance Director Head of In Year Financial Planning Head of Programme and Project Support Head of Future Years Financial Planning In Year Financial Planning (Secretariat)</p>
APOLOGIES	David Reid	Chief Executive, NIEA
<p>KEY POINTS DISCUSSED</p> <p>INTRODUCTION</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mark O'Donnell welcomed everyone to the meeting. • No Conflicts of Interest were declared. • Apologies were received from David Reid who was attending a Ministerial meeting at short notice. <p>MINUTES AND ACTION POINTS OF PREVIOUS MEETING</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Members agreed the minutes of the 11 September 2025 FMPC meeting. • In relation to the action points from the 11 September 2025 meeting, one is to be discussed in Agenda Item 5, and one is to be provided along with the December Monitoring Round Submission to the Permanent Secretary and the Minister. 		

DECEMBER MONITORING ROUND 2025-26

Nuala Hennessy:

- advised that whilst the October Monitoring Round was not formally commissioned by DoF, this exercise was completed internally;
- confirmed that updated indicative budgets were issued to Business Areas on 9 October;
- added that these updated budgets reflected only net Resource DEL movements within Groups, and this meant that where a pressure could not be met from within the Group's allocation it remained unfunded;
- advised that DoF has now commissioned a December Monitoring Round to replace both the October and January Monitoring Rounds with returns due on 20 November;
- added that the AERA Committee briefing is scheduled for 27 November; and
- highlighted Resource DEL, Depreciation, and Capital DEL pressures and easements identified within the Department and made recommendations thereon.

There was significant discussion among members in relation to the resourcing position of the Department as well as the new Departmental Solicitors Office Hard Charge model and the projected pressures for bTB compensation and Avian Influenza.

Members **agreed** that the proposals within the paper are discussed with the Permanent Secretary before being issued to the Minister for consideration.

UPDATE ON EQUALITY SCREENING

Declan McCarney:

- reminded members on the requirements for departments regarding equality duties under Section 75 and Schedule 9 of the Northern Ireland Act 1998;
- advised that the DAERA Draft Budget 2025-26 Allocations Equality and Disability Duties Screening Template was completed and published March 2025;
- confirmed after assessing the impact of the funding allocated and savings identified in the Draft Budget, the decision was made not to conduct an equality impact assessment; and
- added that following in year monitoring to date, the decision to 'screen out' remains valid as no policies implemented were considered to either disadvantage or discriminate specifically against any of the Section 75 groupings as identified in the screening assessment.

Roger Downey advised that he had met with the Equality Commission in September 2024 to discuss last year's Budget equality screening and they were content with the Department's approach. He noted that a similar approach had been adopted this year.

Members noted the recommendations within the paper.

OVERVIEW OF MAJOR PROGRAMMES AND PROJECTS

Melvyn McCurdy:

- detailed DAERA's 19 Major Programmes and Projects (MPP) and the risks identified;
- highlighted that five MPPs have a high Risk Potential Assessment classification and 14 MPPs have been classified as either medium or low risk; and
- provided a summary of changes from the last update to the Committee in May 2025.

Members queried the suitability of the Risk Potential Assessment classification rating for 2 projects: Sustainable Use of Livestock Slurry (SULS) and AFBI/CAFRE Beef Facilities. Members inquired when ratings were last assessed.

Members discussed the summary of Progress and Milestones and the need for Gateway Review Lessons Learnt to be shared with the FMPC and the Department – **Action Point**

Members agreed that the summary should be shared with the Programme and Project Senior Responsible Officers to ensure consistent information is provided – **Action Point**

MAJOR PROGRAMME AND PROJECT DEEP DIVE – WAY FORWARD

Melvyn McCurdy:

- reminded members that an action point from the September FMPC meeting was to 'Establish the purpose of deep dives into Major Programmes or Projects';
- provided options where the FMPC could add value by carrying out deep dives into Programme, Projects and Schemes;
- recommended that should FMPC wish to conduct deep dives, it agrees to select Programmes, Projects and Schemes that are in the development phase; and
- highlighted a list of suitable business cases for selection.

Members discussed the assurances provided to the Committee and agreed that completing the deep dive would be a duplication of the work completed by the Casework Committee and Project/Programme Boards.

Members **agreed** that the Terms of Reference should be reviewed with a paper provided to the Departmental Board – **Action Point**

AGED DEBT ANNUAL OVERVIEW

Declan McCarney:

- provided a summary of the debt position as at 30 September 2025;
- highlighted that debt has decreased from the last update as at 30 September 2024; and
- detailed the debt recovery process.

The Committee noted the paper.

CASEWORK COMMITTEE UPDATE

Nuala Hennessy:

- advised that no business cases have been considered by the Casework Committee since the last update in September 2025;
- updated that the two business cases discussed in the September meeting have now been approved by DoF; and
- highlighted a summary of business cases due to be considered by the Casework Committee in 2025-26 and beyond.

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

- Julie Thompson advised that the PEACE Plus Oversight Board was held on 12 November 2025.
- The next FMPC meeting is scheduled for 19 February 2026.

Mark O'Donnell closed the meeting at 11.50

ACTION POINTS/OFFICIAL RESPONSIBLE/TARGET DATE:

- Gateway Lessons Learnt to be shared with the FMPC and the Department – Programme and Project Support Branch 19 February 2026
- Summary of Progress and Milestones to be shared with Project and Programme Senior Responsible Owners to ensure consistent information is provided – Programme and Project Support Branch 31 December 2025
- Terms of Reference to be reviewed in respect of deep dives into Major Programmes or Projects – Financial Planning Branch 19 February 2026

**Minutes written
by:** Beverley Bhatia

Date: 13 November 2025