



OFFICIAL DAERA MINUTES

MEETING TITLE	Finance and Major Projects Committee (FMPC)	
DIVISION/BRANCH REFERENCE	FMPC 19/25a	
VENUE	Clare House and *MS Teams	
DATE/TIME	15 May 2025 14.00-16.00	
LIST OF ATTENDEES	<p>FMPC MEMBERS Shane Lynch Paul Donnelly*</p> <p>Julie Thompson Roger Downey</p> <p>OTHERS IN ATTENDANCE Richard Crowe* John Joe O’Boyle Declan McCarney Nuala Hennessy Julie McElduff* Helen Mullan* Gemma Robinson* Jamie Given* Beverley Bhatia</p> <p>JOINED FOR AGENDA ITEM Gemma Daly*</p> <p>Ambrose Tohill Lee Williamson* Charles Barnett Francine Manikpure</p>	<p>Non-Executive Board Member (Chair) Deputy Secretary, Strategic Planning & Corporate Services Group Deputy Secretary, Environment, Marine & Fisheries Group Finance Director</p> <p>Director, Regulation and Enforcement Chief Executive, Forest Service Deputy Finance Director Head of In Year Financial Planning Head of Programme and Project Support In Year Financial Planning Future Years Financial Planning Future Years Financial Planning In Year Financial Planning (Secretariat)</p> <p>Director, Enzoootic Control, CSB and Field Delivery Division Acting Director, Estate Transformation Head of TB Policy and Research Head of Business Support, NIEA Head of AFBI Sponsor Branch</p>
APOLOGIES	David Reid	Chief Executive, NIEA
KEY POINTS DISCUSSED		
INTRODUCTION		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> FMPC Chair, Shane Lynch opened the meeting by welcoming everyone and no Conflicts of Interest were declared. 		

MINUTES AND ACTION POINTS OF PREVIOUS MEETING

- Members agreed the minutes of the 28 February 2025 FMPC meeting.
- Action points from the 28 February 2025 meeting were confirmed as complete.

PROVISIONAL OUTTURN 2024-25

Nuala Hennessy:

- reminded members that Provisional Outturn is a measure of Departmental spend against the Final Budget position;
- confirmed that the Provisional Outturn return issued to DoF on 14 May 2025; and
- highlighted the Department's 2024-25 Total DEL Provisional Outturn was 99.9%, broken down as Resource DEL 99.9%, Ringfenced Depreciation DEL 100.0% and Capital DEL 99.8%.

Members acknowledged the excellent work involved in achieving the 99.9% Provisional Outturn figure and noted that going forward in 2025-26, business areas should identify any emerging easements early in the financial year.

JUNE MONITORING ROUND

Nuala Hennessy:

- advised that the June Monitoring Round (JMR) was formally commissioned by DoF on 6 May with returns due on 5 June;
- highlighted pressures and easements identified within the Department;
- added that HM Treasury allocations were received on 14 May 2025 with a shortfall against the Windsor Framework bids;
- detailed the proposed bids to be submitted to DoF; and
- reminded members that budget holders should continue to monitor all budgets closely to live within current allocations.

Roger Downey added that DoF has advised that there will be no official October Monitoring Round (OMR) this year but that an additional Monitoring Round may still be commissioned if there is a need to do so. He also confirmed that DAERA will still carry out an internal Monitoring Round exercise in line with the timescale of the OMR in previous years.

Members discussed resourcing issues and Declan McCarney advised that he is due to meet with the Group Staff Costs Budget Managers to discuss their staff cost budgets. Members also discussed bTB compensation costs and welcomed the VSAHG presentation on the agenda.

In addition members requested that business areas are asked to reconfirm their staff cost budget JMR positions, following liaison with Finance, so that any forecast underspends can be considered for early reallocation - **Action Point**

Members **agreed that** the proposals within the paper should be forwarded to the Permanent Secretary and the Minister for consideration.

VETERINARY SERVICE AND ANIMAL HEALTH GROUP UPDATE

Gemma Daly and Lee Williamson:

- provided an update on the incidence rates of Bovine Tuberculosis (bTB) within Northern Ireland;
- highlighted projected bTB compensation spend for 2025-26;
- reminded members that there is a Statutory Obligation to pay compensation at 100% market value for cattle slaughter for bTB disease control;
- detailed the bids made in the VSAHG June Monitoring Round return;
- confirmed that the Private Vet Practitioners (PVP) bTB testing contract was renewed in April 2025;
- updated the Committee on the actions taken following the Chief Veterinary Officer review of bTB published in November 2024; and
- advised that the recent publication from the new stakeholder body, the TB Partnership Steering Group - *Bovine TB in Northern Ireland: Blueprint for Eradication* (the Blueprint) notes an objective to reduce bTB herd incidence by 2% by 2030, placing NI on a pathway to halve current bTB levels by 2040 and achieve eradication by 2050.

Members discussed the presentation particularly in respect of the ongoing cost pressures and trends and agreed that the costs should continue to be monitored closely.

CAFRE CAMPUS REDEVELOPMENT

Declan McCarney:

- presented the paper on the proposed redevelopment of the CAFRE Greenmount and Loughry campuses;
- detailed the estimated development costs;
- confirmed that the Outline Business Cases were endorsed by the Department's Casework Committee and approved by DoF; and
- highlighted the projects benefits, risks, contingency arrangements and assumptions.

The Committee recognised the need to invest in the Animal Health Science Building and both Greenmount and Loughry Campuses given the age of the buildings and also expressed the view that it was important to invest in education to benefit our young people and the agri-food industry.

However, the Committee had affordability concerns in relation to the risk of the Department undertaking three large construction projects all at the one time and the impact it may have on other capital projects and grants that may be a higher priority.

The Committee also suggested deferring this decision until after the 11 June when the Chancellor is expected to announce the outcome of the spending review. At that stage there may be further clarity on the Capital DEL allocations to the NI Block.

Overall, the Committee was content that the proposals could be submitted to both the Permanent Secretary and the Minister to make the decision to progress the campus redevelopment projects.

LONG TERM ESTATE STRATEGY / ESTATE ASSET MANAGEMENT PLAN

Ambrose Tohill:

- reminded members that historically an annual Asset Management Plan (AMP) was produced by Estate Transformation Division (ETD), which under DoF guidance covered a five year period looking one year back and four years ahead;
- confirmed that following the need to have a more proactive, longer-term outlook in terms of capital investment planning, a Long-Term Estate Strategy framework document was agreed by Departmental Board;
- advised that ETD has now transitioned from the production of an annual AMP to an Asset Management Update 2025/26 and Long-Term Estate Strategy Action Plan which looks further ahead over a 20-year period facilitating better forward planning for the estate;
- updated members on DAERA's key estate projects;
- detailed the reduction in office space following the moves from Dundonald House and Klondyke Building;
- highlighted the reduction in energy consumption and the savings therein;
- discussed the Asset Review Process which underpins the Estate Strategy Action Plan; and
- emphasised that the estate is aged and in need of modernisation, evidenced by the many service continuity failures that emerged during the past year as detailed in the Asset Management Update.

Members discussed the office estate and carbon emissions.

Shane suggested that the Estate Strategy Action Plan should be updated to include an additional Theme on reducing future estate operating costs which Ambrose agreed to consider.

OVERVIEW OF MAJOR PROGRAMMES AND PROJECTS

Julie McElduff:

- detailed DAERA's 19 Major Programmes and Projects (MPP) and the risks identified;
- highlighted that six MPPs have a high Risk Potential Assessment classification and 13 MPPs have been classified as either medium or low risk; and
- provided a summary of changes from the last update to the Committee in November 2024.

NIEA FINANCE UPDATE

Charles Barnett:

- provided an update on NIEA's current financial position;
- detailed the 2024-25 closing budget for NIEA;

- advised that the audit of the NIEA's 2024-25 accounts is currently underway and confirmed that the draft Annual Report and Accounts is due to be presented to ARAC on 21 May 2025 and NIAO on 30 May 2025; and
- added that NIEA are liaising with NICS HR regarding all current NIEA vacancies.

FOREST SERVICE UPDATE

John Joe O'Boyle:

- reminded members of Forest Service's classification as a non- financial public corporation and gave a brief overview of 2024-25;
- advised on the impact of Storm Eowyn in January 2025 and that management of its aftermath is expected to continue throughout 2025-26;
- detailed the 2025-26 Budget Allocation for Forest Service; and
- provided the timetable for the 2024-25 Annual Report and Accounts.

AFBI FINANCE UPDATE

Francine Manikpure:

- confirmed that AFBI's draft 2024-25 Annual Report and Accounts are currently being prepared and AFBI presented these to the AFBI Audit and Risk Assurance Committee (ARAC) on 8 May 2025;
- advised that Audit planning is underway by NIAO and a project management approach is being undertaken to ensure the Annual Report and Accounts are prepared, audited and laid in the Assembly by the faster close deadline of 4 July 2025;
- highlighted detail of AFBI's 2024-25 Provisional Outturn return to DAERA and that AFBI was within tolerance;
- advised that the Minister had approved three-month extensions to five AFBI Board members who are the chairs of the sub-committees in AFBI, and that the Minister was currently considering the submission to appoint a new deputy Chair and Board members;
- summarised AFBI's 2025-26 budget position; and
- confirmed that AFBI is working towards submitting the Green Growth Living Landscape business case to the Department by the end of May.

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

- Members agreed to issue the FMPC Terms of Reference and Forward Workplan 2025-26 to DB for approval.
- The next meeting is scheduled for 11 September 2025.

Shane Lynch closed the meeting at 16.25.

ACTION POINTS/OFFICIAL RESPONSIBLE/TARGET DATE:

- Business areas to reconfirm their Staff Costs Budget June Monitoring Round positions – In-Year Financial Planning Branch

**Minutes written
by: Beverley Bhatia**

Date: 16 May 2025