

DAERA FINANCE AND MAJOR PROJECTS COMMITTEE

Thursday 19 February 2026 – 2.00pm – 3.30pm
Board Room, 2nd Floor, Clare House

AGENDA

Chair: Mark O'Donnell

	Agenda Item	Introduced by	Indicative Timings	Paper Reference
1	Apologies, Minutes of Previous Meeting and Action Points	Mark O'Donnell	2.00-2.05 (5 mins)	FMPC 32/25a FMPC 32/25b
2	City & Growth Deals	Jason Foy	2.05-2.20 (15 mins)	FMPC 01/26
3	PEACEPLUS	Jason Foy	2.20-2.35 (15 mins)	FMPC 02/26
4	In Year Budget	Roger Downey	2.35-2.45 (10 mins)	Oral update
5	Update on Budget 2026-2030	Declan McCarney	2.45-3.00 (15 mins)	FMPC 03/26
6	Casework Committee Update	Nuala Hennessy	3.00-3.10 (10 mins)	FMPC 04/26
7	Committee Terms of Reference and Forward Workplan	Nuala Hennessy	3.10-3.15 (5 mins)	FMPC 05/26
8	AOB	Mark O'Donnell	3.15-3.20 (5 mins)	
9	Finish		3.20	

Next FMPC meeting scheduled for Thursday 14 May 2026



OFFICIAL DAERA MINUTES

MEETING TITLE	Finance and Major Projects Committee (FMPC)	
DIVISION/BRANCH REFERENCE	FMPC 06/26a	
VENUE	Clare House and *MS Teams	
DATE/TIME	19 February 2026 2.00pm	
LIST OF ATTENDEES	FMPC MEMBERS Mark O'Donnell Julie Thompson Roger Downey OTHERS IN ATTENDANCE Jason Foy* Declan McCarney Nuala Hennessy Helen Mullan* Collette Mullan* Una O'Boyle* Beverley Bhatia	Deputy Secretary, Strategic Planning & Corporate Services Group (Chair) Deputy Secretary, Environment, Marine & Fisheries Group Finance Director Director of Rural Affairs Deputy Finance Director Head of In Year Financial Planning In Year Financial Planning In Year Financial Planning In Year Financial Planning In Year Financial Planning (Secretariat)
APOLOGIES	Fiona McCandless David Reid	Deputy Secretary, Estates Transformation & Windsor Framework Implementation Group Chief Executive, NIEA
KEY POINTS DISCUSSED		
INTRODUCTION		
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Mark O'Donnell welcomed everyone to the meeting.• Apologies were received from Fiona McCandless and David Reid.• No Conflicts of Interest were declared.		
MINUTES AND ACTION POINTS OF PREVIOUS MEETING		
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Members agreed the minutes of the 13 November 2025 FMPC meeting.• In relation to the action points from the 13 November 2025 meeting, one is confirmed as complete, one is to be discussed in Agenda Item 7 and one is to be completed prior to the May FMPC meeting.		

CITY & GROWTH DEALS

Jason Foy:

- reminded members that DAERA is the Accountable Department for three projects under the Causeway Coast & Glens Growth Deal and one project under the Mid South West Growth Deal;
- detailed proposed timings by which Outline Business Cases and Deal Signings are expected;
- discussed the timing of the receipt of an Outline Business Case for a project under the Causeway Coast & Glens Growth Deal by the Department;
- added that the Department is liaising extensively with the Causeway Coast and Glens Borough Council on queries prior to issuing to the Department's Economists; and
- updated members on the Complementary Fund projects, Whitespots Country Park and Digital Transformation Flexible Fund.

There were significant discussions on the Robotics Automation and Packaging Innovation Centre (RAPIC) project at CAFRE's Loughry Campus. Roger Downey advised that the Minister is currently considering Capital Budget proposals which include the CAFRE redevelopment at Loughry. Members suggested that Rural Affairs Division contacts CAFRE to explore the options in relation to the projected funding profile in the RAPIC Project.

PEACEPLUS

Jason Foy:

- provided updates on the PEACEPLUS Investment Areas for which DAERA is the Accountable Department;
- highlighted a summary of each project;
- advised that Rural Affairs Division has become aware of projects for which DAERA is not the Accountable Department but may still be of interest to business areas across the Department; and
- confirmed that an Internal Audit Review of PEACEPLUS Governance 2025/26 was conducted with an overall audit rating of satisfactory.

Members discussed the budget management and forecasting provided by SEUPB. Jason advised that this is improving with new contacts and routines established. Members queried the need for DAERA to be observers on the Project Oversight Boards and Jason advised that whilst SEUPB is present on these Boards, Rural Affairs Division could consider this for projects which have concerns or risks.

Roger Downey queried if the Minister had been provided with details of proposed total spend by DAERA on rural projects from all funding streams including Executive Earmarked Funding, City & Growth Deals and PEACEPLUS. Jason advised he would talk to the Head of Food, Farming & Rural Affairs Group regarding providing a briefing on this to the Minister – **Action Point**

IN YEAR BUDGET

Nuala Hennessy:

- provided an update on the current Budget 2025-26 position;
- summarised the final reduced requirements identified by the Department as part of the December Monitoring Round;
- advised that the internal Estimated Provisional Outturn exercises commenced in January, with returns from the second exercise received last week; and

- summarised the Resource DEL and Capital DEL positions following the first Estimated Provisional Outturn Exercise as at 31 December 2025.

The was some discussion around the current position and it was agreed that an update should be provided to the Permanent Secretary – **Action Point**

UPDATE ON BUDGET 2026-2030

Declan McCarney:

- provided an update on the Budget 2026-30 position;
- advised that the Minister of Finance's proposed Draft Budget 2026-29/30 for DAERA has not been approved by the Executive and is therefore subject to change;
- detailed the proposed allocations to DAERA;
- advised that officials were undertaking an iterative process with the Minister on proposed internal allocations on Resource DEL and Capital DEL; and
- added that final/indicative opening budgets will be disseminated to business areas across the Department in due course.

Members discussed Resource DEL including bTB Compensation costs and staff costs and agreed that it would be useful to get an updated position of vacancies within the Department – **Action Point**

CASEWORK COMMITTEE UPDATE

Nuala Hennessy provided an update of the current position around the Casework Committee advising that no business cases have been considered since the last update in November 2025.

Members noted the large number of business cases due to be considered by the Casework Committee within the coming weeks and requested that Finance Division contact Business Areas to schedule potential Casework Committee meeting dates for those with an estimated date of Q4 2025-26 – **Action Point**

COMMITTEE TERMS OF REFERENCE AND FORWARD WORKPLAN

Declan McCarney:

- reminded members that the Terms of Reference (ToR) and Forward Workplan (FWP) should be reviewed at least annually;
- detailed the comments and suggested amendments to the ToR and FWP provided by members following the request in January 2026; and
- highlighted the proposed changes to the ToR and FWP.

Members suggested that it would be beneficial for Finance Division to liaise with Forest Service and NIEA to advise what information should be provided within their updates to the Committee during 2026-27 – **Action Point**.

Members **agreed** that the draft ToR and FWP should issue to DB for agreement – **Action Point**

ANY OTHER BUSINESS

- The next FMPC meeting is scheduled for 14 May 2026.

Mark O'Donnell closed the meeting at 3.25pm

ACTION POINTS/OFFICIAL RESPONSIBLE/TARGET DATE:

- Discuss with the Head of FFRAG regarding providing a briefing to the Minister on proposed total spend on rural projects from all funding streams – Jason Foy 14 May 2026.
- Provide an update on Estimated Provisional Outturn to Permanent Secretary – Mark O'Donnell / Roger Downey 24 February 2026
- Provide an update on the current position of vacancies within the Department – Roger Downey 14 May 2026.
- Contact Business Areas to schedule potential Casework Committee meeting dates for those with an estimated date of Q4 2025-26 – Roger Downey 28 February 2026.
- Liaise with Forest Service and NIEA to advise what information should be provided within their updates to the Committee during 2026-27 – Roger Downey 14 May 2026
- Committee Terms of Reference and 2026-27 Forward Workplan to issue to the Departmental Board for agreement – Mark O' Donnell 25 March 2026

**Minutes written
by:** Beverley Bhatia

Date: 20 February 2026