



MINISTER'S PRE-BRIEF AND MEETING NOTE

It is the business area's responsibility for keeping a CM record of the final agreed note.

☐ PRE-BRIEF

☒ MEETING

INV / SUB Reference Number: INV-0200-2026

DATE OF MEETING: 01 APRIL 2026

TITLE/ORGANISATION:		Fishing industry representatives NIFPO and NIFF		
VENUE:	Nautilus Centre Kilkeel Harbour			
☐ Parliament Buildings	☐ Clare House	☒ OTHER: Please specify location	☐ Virtual	☐ Hybrid
LIST OF ATTENDEES:				
☒ Minister	☐ SpAd	☒ PS Wendy Patterson	☐ APS	
OFFICIALS:				
External Attendees:	Rt Hon Hilary Benn (NI SoS) (HB) Chris Hazzard MP (CH) 			

KEY POINTS DISCUSSED:

■ welcomed everyone for coming, thanked Ministers for their time and provided an overview of the fishing industry in Northern Ireland.

■ provided a presentation (Annex A) on what the industry has delivered around three pillars of people, planet and prosperity. Initiatives such as recruitment strategy, welfare action plan and leadership for skippers were covered.

There was some discussion on reputation management and this was around the public perception of bottom trawling and treatment of foreign crew.

■ outlined some of the projects that industry is participating in such as MSC fisheries improvement plans for Nephrops and scallops.

HB asked how this had changed practice – ■ confirmed no significant changes yet as it is a long-term programme and will enable the fleet to be responsive should changes occur.

Other initiatives were covered such as assessment of fleet emissions, designing a net zero vessel, research roadmap for reducing emissions and fuel monitoring. HB highlighted that seafood is a low carbon, nutritious protein source. Similar projects across the UK were discussed.

■ gave an overview of some of the NI Gear Trials Project and innovative fishing gear trials that have been delivered by NI industry. Trialling ways to reduce vulnerable bycatch and create fuel efficiencies through reducing drag.

■ highlighted some of the challenges including reliance on foreign crew, cost of visas, cliff edge on visa requirements, spatial squeeze, reduced sale price of Nephrops and increasing fuel prices.

HB enquired about the timeline from 100% local fleet to 70% non-UK. Representatives confirmed that the decline has been over the past 20 years. ■ highlighted how it's difficult to get young people to join the industry due to low wages and difficult conditions.

There were further discussions on the cost to employ fishing crew due to UK visa requirements.

Spatial squeeze was discussed in more detail. HB highlighted that there is a need for renewable energy including offshore wind to reduce reliance on oil and fossil fuels but the space must be managed with industry involved.

■ raised the IoM immigration issue that prohibits NI vessels with foreign crew operating within IoM territorial waters.

■ highlighted that this is a serious concern and he is engaging with IoM Ministers in person due to the importance.

■ outlined that the UK skilled worker visa stipulates that work must take place within the UK, this would not include IoM waters. Furthermore IoM has their own similar visa.

■ has requested a meeting with Minister Mike Tapp on the skilled worker visa issues.

HB agreed to take up meeting request with Minister Tapp.

■ raised fuel increases due to war in Iran. HB advised that the war is outside of our control and funding is not possible due to the previous borrowing resulting from increased fuel prices.

Displacement due to wind and the upcoming MPA consultation were also discussed.

■ highlighted that we have legal obligations to meet in terms of MPAs and consultation will be an opportunity to engage.

■ was concerned about herring spawning and offshore wind.

■ reassured that herring have had the highest level of protection and the ecosystem approach has been recognised in the past.

HB remarked about evidence of recovery in some offshore wind sites.

■ highlighted the impacts to business due to the combined pressures, the reliance on the fishing industry by the coastal communities and the concerns with fishermen's mental health.

CH raised the Fishing and Coastal Growth Fund and that it should not have been allocated through Barnett's formula, NI due to receive 2.8% whereas we would usually receive 10%.

■ advised that he, along with Scottish Government colleagues, raised this with Defra SoS and agree that Barnett's formula should not have been applied.

There was a further discussion on crew and visas, including Transit visas where tax and National Insurance is paid for crew. Crew required for at least 8 months per year.

The issue of fuel and funding was also raised again – HB the Government are trying to stabilise public finances due to debt incurred from previous borrowing.

■ thanked all for coming and listening to the challenges and encouraged us all to continue to work together.

ISSUES AGREED: (must be completed)

- Industry progress noted on people, planet and prosperity, including recruitment, welfare, leadership and emissions work.
- Environmental initiatives (MSC FIPs, gear trials) acknowledged as long-term but important for future practice, bycatch reduction and fuel efficiency.
- Spatial squeeze recognised, with agreement that offshore wind and MPAs must involve industry through consultation.
- Crew and visa issues highlighted as a major risk to fleet viability, alongside recruitment challenges and rising costs.
- Isle of Man immigration restrictions on foreign crew accepted as a serious issue, with Minister ■ actively engaging counterparts.

• Economic pressures (fuel, prices, displacement) and impacts on coastal communities and fishermen's mental health acknowledged	
ACTION POINTS & OFFICIAL RESPONSIBLE: • ACTION 1: HB to contact Minister Tapp in regards to meeting with industry on visa issues – industry will follow up • ACTION 2: [REDACTED] and officials to meet IoM Ministers in person to discuss immigration issue – [REDACTED] to keep industry updated on progress.	
Notes written by - [REDACTED]	DATE: 01 April 2026

[Complete as appropriate]

Signed and Dated by most Senior Official in attendance: [REDACTED]

Signed and Dated by Minister/Private Secretary: [REDACTED]

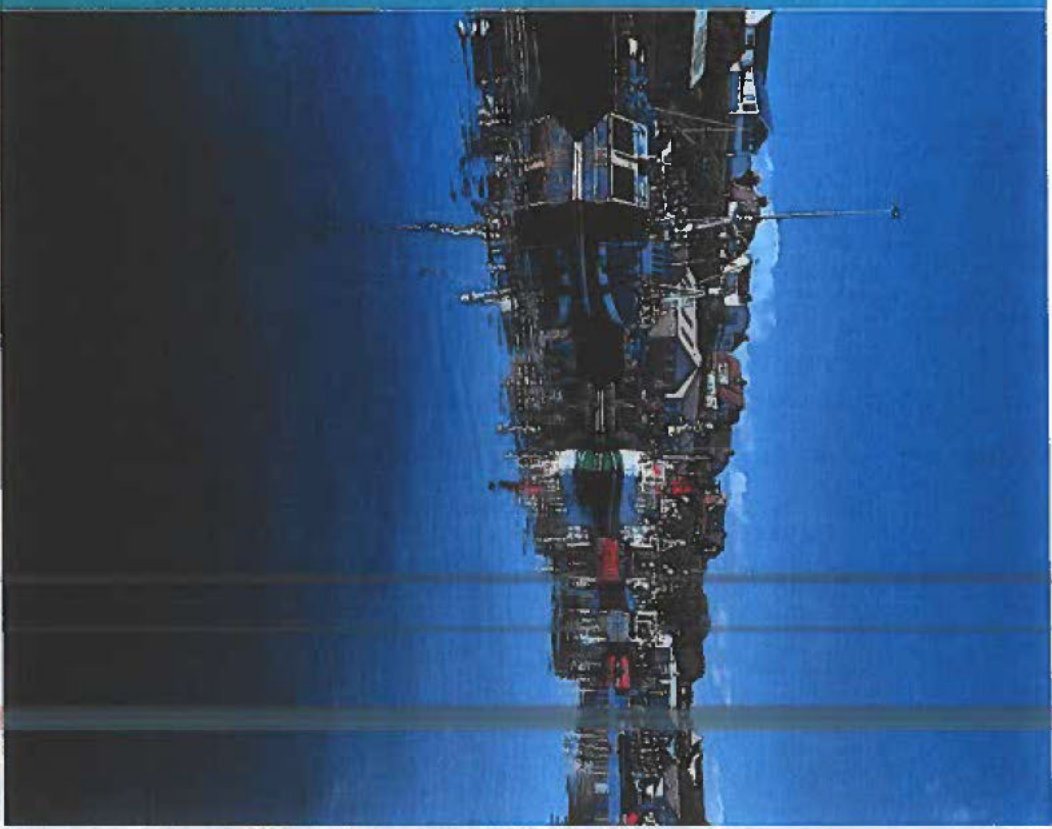
17/4/26 _____



Welcome

Visit of Secretary of State and DAERA Minister to
Kilkeel Harbour

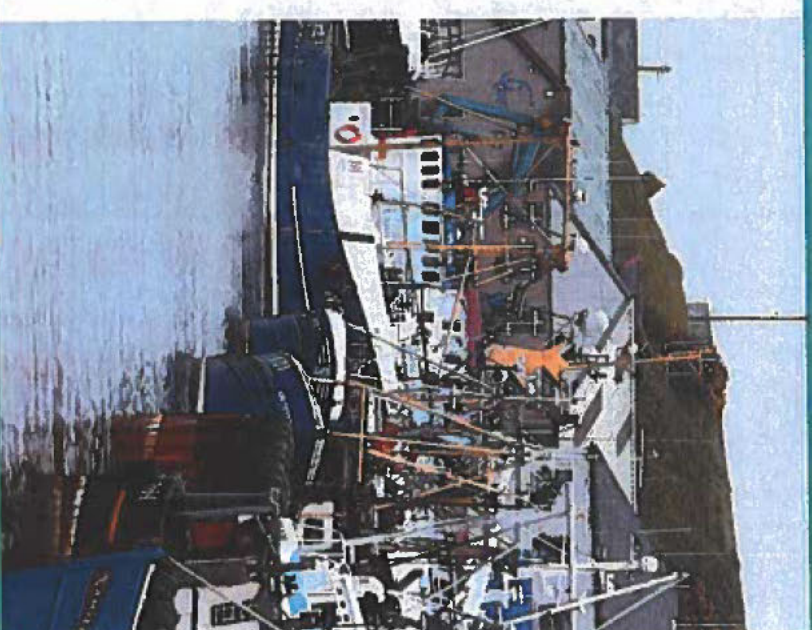
1 April 2026



Introduction

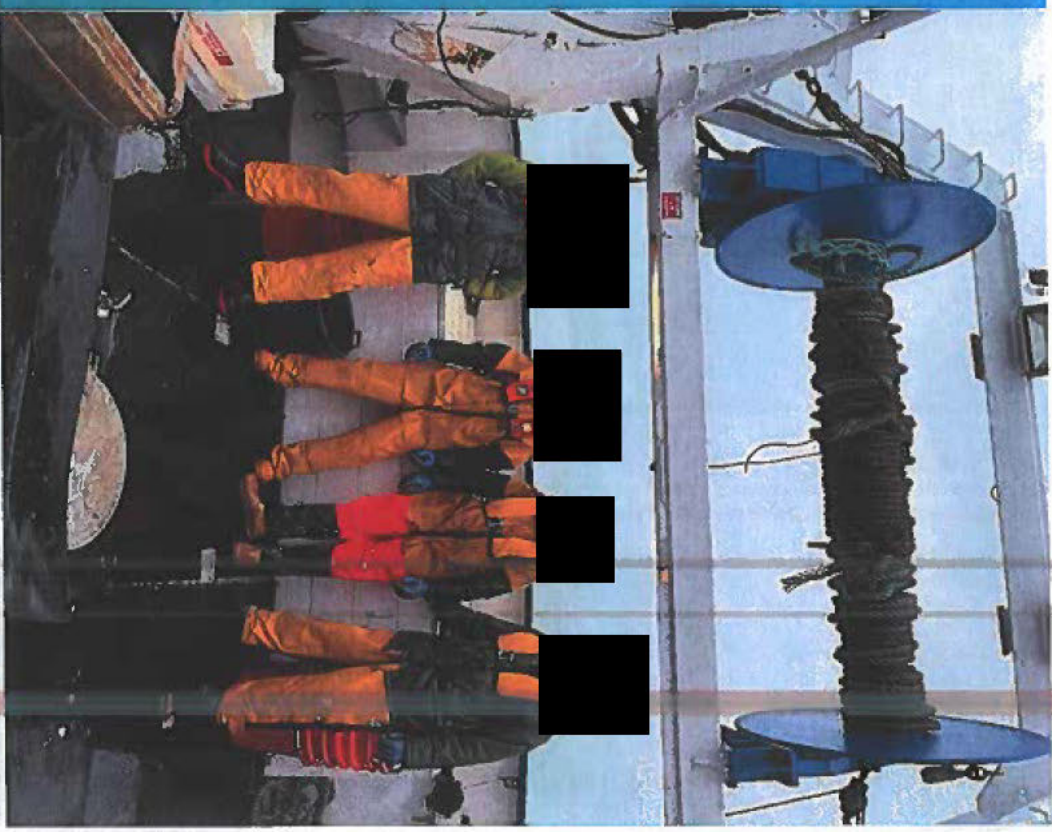


- Two POs, one Federation - NIFPO, ANIFPO and NIFF.
- In 2024 the NI fishing fleet generated:
 - **>£50m** in landing values
 - From **>200 vessels**, the majority of which fish in the Irish Sea from the three main ports of Portavogie, Ardglass and Kilkeel.
 - **Employed 445** people full-time
 - Supported **18 seafood processing businesses**
 - **>6,500 further jobs ashore** across Northern Ireland's rural and coastal communities.





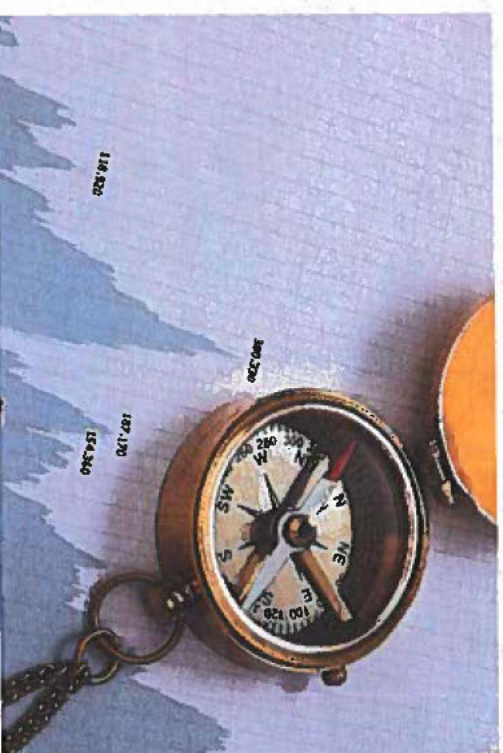
A sector striving to succeed



Charting our course: NIFF Industry Roadmap



- Industry owned Roadmap focussed on three strategic pillars that together integrate the **social, environmental, and economic** requirements of a modern, resilient, and future-ready industry.
- These pillars provide the framework through which the industry can **strengthen its workforce, safeguard the marine environment, and build a competitive and profitable seafood economy** capable of thriving amid changing market, regulatory, and environmental conditions.
- **Our People Pillar:** Delivering a safe, skilled and supported workforce.
- **Our Planet Pillar:** Demonstrating leadership in responsible stewardship of the marine resource and the wider marine environment.
- **Our Prosperity Pillar:** Ensuring the fishing industry is economically resilient and financially viable.



Charting our course for the next 5 years

Roadmap achievements



What we have delivered already:

People

- Recruitment strategy
- A Business plan to support training delivery in NI.
- NIFF Welfare Action Plan / leadership training for skippers.
- Fishing Safety Roadshows.

Planet

- Sustainability initiatives
- Reducing our carbon footprint
- Gear trials

Prosperity

- Reputation management
- Seafood Promotion
- Spatial squeeze – building our evidence base

NI Fishing Crew Recruitment Action Plan Questionnaire

Complete a survey for a chance to win a £50 voucher for the NIFFO Chandlery Store!

Fishing crew employers are encouraged to take part in the survey to support the ongoing efforts by the Northern Ireland Federation to develop the Fishing Crew Recruitment Action Plan. Input is critical for ensuring the future availability of information shared via the survey is recognised by NIFF for the purposes of the Action Plan.

On completion of the survey, employers will be entered into a draw for a £50 NIFFO voucher.

A Career at Sea

Good Skills | Good Rewards | Good Opportunities

Working in Northern Ireland

Over 200+ jobs across 90+ different sectors

Over 100+ jobs across 100+ different sectors

Over 100+ jobs across 100+ different sectors

Over 100+ jobs across 100+ different sectors

Fishing in Northern Ireland

NIFF Northern Ireland

Fisheries Improvement Projects (FIPs)

Nephrops

MSC Project UK (2019 – 2014)



MSC Improvement Programme Fishery (2024 – 2030)

- Responsive management
- Reduced unwanted bycatch

This FIP is vital for market access in the UK.

Scallops

MSC Project UK (2019 – 2014)

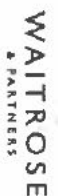


Independent FIP (2024 – 2030)

- Responsive management and effort control
- Improved catch recording

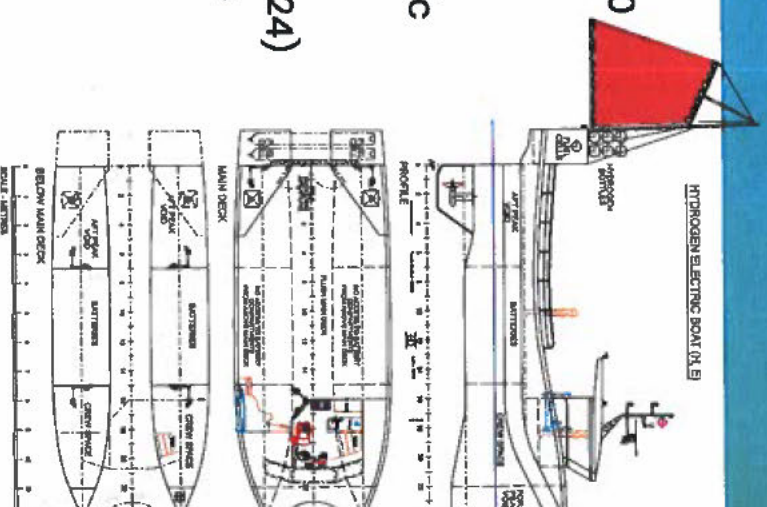


Fisheries Improvement Project (FIP) collaborators

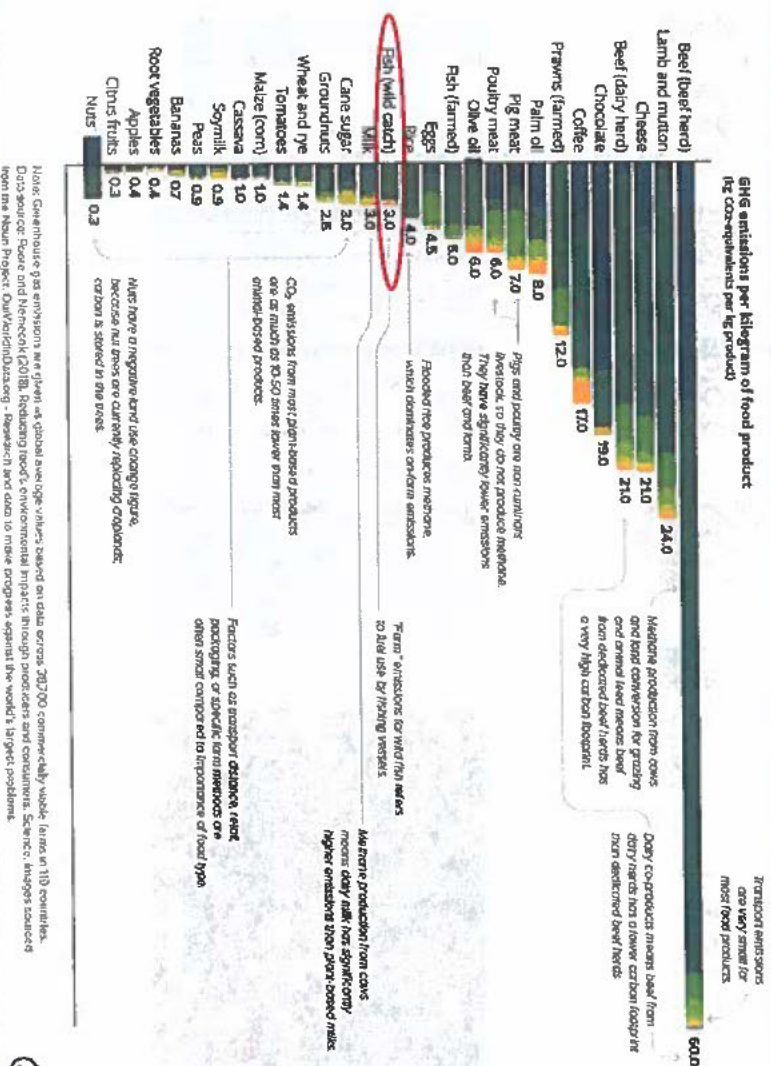


Emissions and Fuel Use

1. Assessment of NI fleet emissions (2022)
 - Estimated CO2 emissions from 2018-2020
2. Net zero fishing vessel study (2023)
 - DAERA/Industry study in Norway
 - Developed a under 10m hydrogen electric design
3. Research Roadmap for NI fishing vessels (2024)
 - Alternative fuels and propulsion systems
 - Gear modifications
 - Infrastructure needs
 - Training/skills needs
4. Hefting fuel monitoring/ Ecomotus



The 'climate smart' food we produce



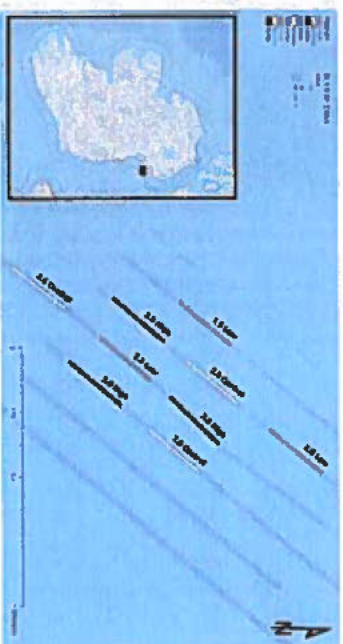
NI Fleet Emissions Estimates (2018-2020)	
Fleet Segment	GHG intensity (kg CO ₂ e/kg of landings)
Nephrops	2.61
Scallop	4.61
Pelagic	0.42
Potting	1.22

- **We are a producer of a sustainable, low-carbon protein source.** Fishing emissions account for only 0.1% of Net GHG emissions in Northern Ireland.
- Opportunity to innovate: methods of reducing fuel use, and piloting technologies with the goal to **improve vessel efficiencies and overall economic viability.**

UK Seafood Fund / DEFRA Fishing Industry Science Partnership Fund



Project: Improved estimates of bottom contact and recovery (RESONANCE)



Northern Ireland Gear Trials Project

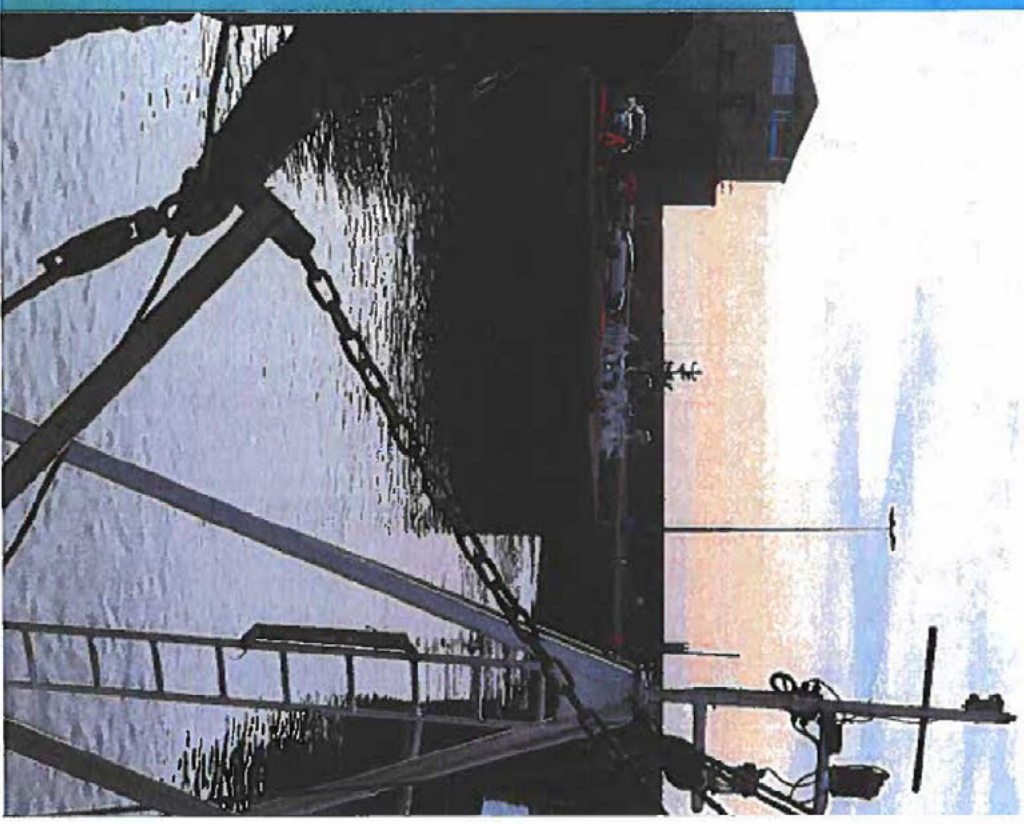


Department of
Agriculture, Environment
and Rural Affairs

afbi seatfish



The current and extreme challenges faced by the NI fishing industry in 2026



The Perfect Storm



- **NI industry are facing the perfect storm**
- A high reliance on foreign crew—70% of overseas crew
- Escalating costs of SWVs over time and now a cliff edge where beyond this year they will not be available.
- It is already financially unviable to bring in new crew at the most recent salary threshold and unfeasible due to English language requirements now at degree level.
- Continuing erosion of the areas available to fish.
- Price decreases for raw product – from £7.30 last year to £5 per kg now.
- A reduction of 20% in Nephrops quota equating to a £3.5m loss in the value of landings
- Increasing fuel prices/ price shocks due to global events.



Ardglass Harbour during Storm Brendan in 2020

Crew challenges

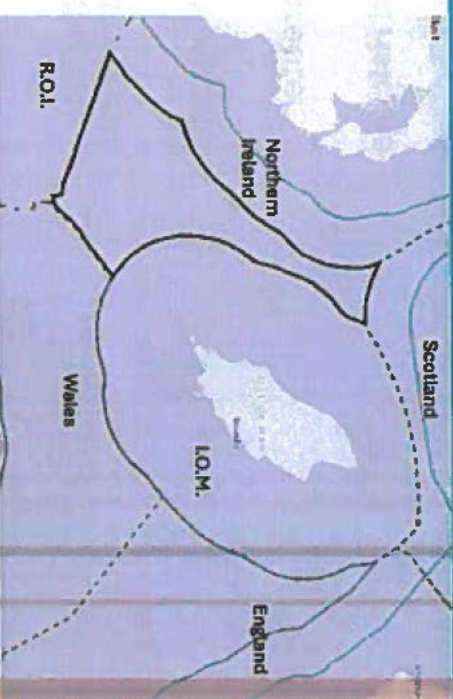
- NI has a long history of employing foreign crew – Nephrops fleet are most highly reliant fleet segment with 70% of crew from overseas and 92% employed as deckhands. **Without our valued foreign crew, our vessels cannot fish.**
- From 31 December 2026, fishing occupations, including SOC codes 5119 and 9119 (deckhands and labourers), will **no longer be eligible for SWVs.**
- The Temporary Shortage List concession will permanently end & fishing roles will not be added to any future shortage lists following the 2025 MAC review.
- Post-2026, no visa route will exist for recruiting foreign deckhands, eliminating the only pathway for foreign crew to operate inside 12nm.
- Only workers already on a SWV before 22 July 2025 are temporarily protected
 - crew may extend their visa, although unaffordable salary uplifts apply.
- **We are left with no options for recruiting crew on SWVs beyond 2026.**



from the [redacted] and [redacted]
onboard the [redacted] based [redacted]

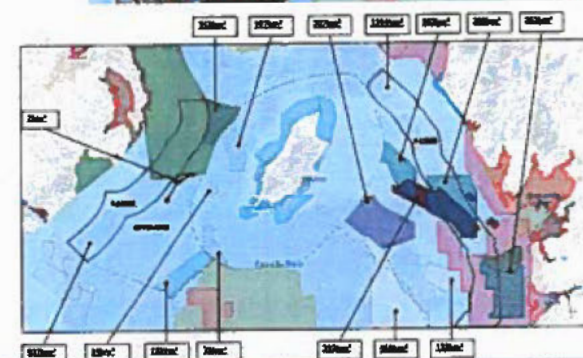
Squeezed out – our spatial challenges

- The Irish Sea is spatially constrained and jurisdictionally complex – six administrations, UK and non-UK have a stake.
- The Irish Sea supports important commercial fisheries for Nephrops, scallops, herring, groundfish, crab and lobster.
- NI offshore region – economically very important for industry and the only area outside 12nm and available to vessels employing crew on transit visas.
- The concentration of red dots (AIS data from 18 representative NI vessels) is indicative of the mud patches in the Irish Sea where Nephrops are found.
- We have recently been informed that LOM waters are now a no go for vessels with foreign crew – both those on transit visas and those on UK SWVs.
- **Isle of Man waters are of huge importance to the NI fleet as evidenced by AIS.**



Squeezed out- our spatial challenges

- The NI offshore region (black thick line), IOM mud closure sites (yellow) and the NI offshore MPAs (red).
- The brown area indicates the combined area of the recommended resource zones for inshore & offshore fixed and floating wind farm development areas.
- The areas already lost to fishing in the Irish Sea due to MPAs, windfarms, restrictions associated with working visas for migrant crew members totals 4700 Km²
- IOM waters are a loss of a further 4000km²
- This equates to a loss of 8700 km² to the fishing industry in the last decade - over half the total land area of Northern Ireland at around 14,000km².
- We have also lost access to the Irish 6-12nm limit - another important area for the NI industry.
- If the NI offshore MPAs are added, the area would be even greater again (another 300km²).
- **The spatial restraints we are facing are unsustainable and risk the future viability of the remaining grounds.**



Our catch, costs and profits

- The past year has seen a reduction of:
- 20% in **Nephrops** quota equating to a £3.5m loss in the value of landings.
- 20% cut this year (£600,000 loss) in **herring** and a 42% cut since 2024 (£1.8m in landings/ £5.4m including export values)
- 48% decrease in **mackerel** (a predicted loss of £9.6m)
- The Nephrops industry have also suffered price decreases for raw product – from **£7.30 last year to £5 per kg now.**
- Global events have caused escalating fuel prices which have seen a sudden surge in prices from less **than 70p per litre at the start of March to £1.19** at the beginning of last week (23 March).
- The financial operating environment is extremely challenging and some fishermen have indicated they can't continue.



Why does this matter?



- Fishing is the bedrock of our coastal communities and **with one job on a fishing boat supporting 15 jobs on land**, a whole supply chain starts at the cod end – we are all here thanks to the men who go to sea.
- Fishing directly or indirectly accounts for 47% of employment in Portavogie, 20% in Ardglass and 15% in Kilkeel.
- These issues risk triggering **irreversible structural decline**: the forced sale of vessels, closure of processing businesses and infrastructure, and the potential collapse of supply chains.
- Once a fishery has been dismantled, it cannot simply start up again. **Vessels and businesses cannot tie up for a few years in hope** of a return of better times.
- Fishing communities are resilient but have **endured successive shocks** over recent decades.
- The current issues have deepened existing **mental-health pressures** for fishermen, particularly vessel owners and this is an increasing concern for those individuals, their families and communities.

EMERGENCY HELPLINES



NORTHERN IRELAND
FISHERIES SAFETY FORUM

FOR EMERGENCY SERVICES

Contact
HM Coastguard
on VHF channel 16
or call 999.



FOR MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT

Having suicidal thoughts?
Call the Samaritans
24/7 helpline
on 116 123.

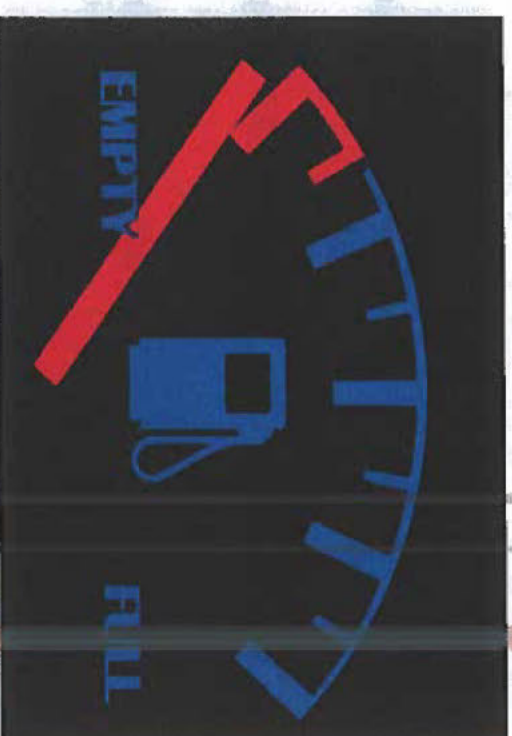
Feeling stressed,
isolated or low?
Text 'FISH' to 85258.



MAKING FISHING SAFER TOGETHER

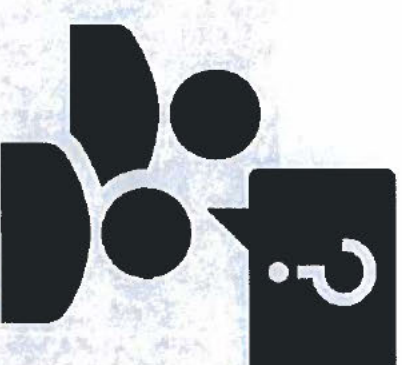
Conclusions

1. We are facing into the **Perfect Storm**.
2. This existential crisis needs a **joined up approach** from UK Govt and the NI Assembly.
3. The industry are **"running on empty"** after a long hard winter.
4. **Help is needed now** on crew, spatial squeeze and on fuel.
5. The proposed consultation on Management measures in MPAs would put an industry in crisis under **extra and unbearable pressure**.



Discussion points

- **On crew:** How will the Government ensure we are still able to fish safely beyond 2026 when we stand to lose crew which will in turn force boats to tie up?
- **On spatial squeeze:** Can Government provide some reassurance to industry that the Irish Sea mud patch, of critical importance to the fishing industry will be protected for food production and not closed to fishing?
- **On current fuel prices:** What support measures will be put in place to help industry to weather the current fuel prices? Will there be a support package for fuel or a tie scheme made available?
- **On funding opportunities:** How will Government ensure funding opportunities address the real needs of an industry in crisis?
- **On the Perfect Storm industry are facing:** Will consideration be given to a decommissioning scheme?





MINISTER'S PRE-BRIEF AND MEETING NOTE

It is the business area's responsibility for keeping a CM record of the final agreed note.

☐ PRE-BRIEF

☒ MEETING

INV / SUB Reference Number: INV-0289-2026

DATE OF MEETING: 13 APRIL 2026

TITLE/ORGANISATION:		Current Price Pressures / Meeting with Ulster Farmers Union (UFU)		
VENUE:				
☒ Parliament Buildings	☐ Clare House	☐ OTHER: Please specify location	☐ Virtual	☒ Hybrid
LIST OF ATTENDEES:				
☒ Minister	☒ SpAd	☒ PS	☐ APS	
OFFICIALS:	Mark McLean [REDACTED]			
External Attendees:	William Irvine Alexander Kinnear			
KEY POINTS DISCUSSED: • Significant issue of price and availability of fuel and fertiliser in NI. • Clarity on market information for fuel, fertiliser and supply chain. • Current information was that there was sufficient availability of fertiliser in NI to last until end of April 2026, uncertain of supply afterwards. Update to be obtained at DAERA meeting with industry on 14 April 2026. • Schemes and options available for farmers in EU countries.				

• UFU travelling to Westminster to discuss support for NI farmers. • Grant schemes, targeted funding and supplementary payment. • Pricing and availability of black plastic. • 5p reduction on excise duty which is due to be reapplied in October 2026; need for the reduction to continue.	
ISSUES AGREED: (must be completed) • Fuel excise duty and prices are not devolved matters – for Westminster to consider support. • Officials to consider as to whether supplementary payment to farmers could be targeted on the basis of fuel use. • Consideration to be given by the Minister to the UFU letter to party leaders	
ACTION POINTS & OFFICIAL RESPONSIBLE: • ACTION 1: Clarification of the current market position for fuel, fertiliser, and the supply chain to be provided to UFU- Mark McLean • ACTION 2: Officials to consider as to whether supplementary payment to farmers could be targeted on the basis of fuel use – Richard Johnston.	
Notes written by – [REDACTED]	DATE: 13/04/2026

Signed and Dated by most Senior Official in attendance: MARK MCLEAN
13/04/2026

Signed and Dated by Minister/Private Secretary: [REDACTED]
17/4/26 _____



Isle of Man Treasury & Northern Ireland Department of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Affairs Meeting

Date: Wednesday 15th April 2026
Time: 14:16
Venue: King Orry Meeting Room, 3rd Floor, Central Government Offices, Bucks Road, Douglas

IOM Government Attendees:

Chris Thomas MHK, Minister for the Treasury (Chair)
Clare Barber MHK, Minister for Environment, Food and Agriculture

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

NI Department of Agriculture, Environment & Rural Affairs Attendees:

Andrew Muir MLA, Minister for Agriculture, Environment & Rural Affairs

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]

Meeting Notes

1. Welcome & introductions

- Ministers welcomed the guests from NI Department of Agriculture, Environment & Rural Affairs; and all attendees introduced themselves.

2. Immigration / Migrant Labour (Fishing Fleet)

- The Isle of Man remains aligned to the UK immigration framework and the Common Travel Area.
- Confirmation was issued that there have been no recent changes to immigration rules, and this was recognised by both jurisdictions.

- The Northern Ireland delegation outlined reliance on migrant workers (particularly the prawn fleet) and the impact of IOM Visa requirements upon the fleet. The range of issues negatively impacting the fleet including fuel costs, spatial squeeze, mud flat closures, offshore wind and harbour fees were highlighted.
- Options discussed included Isle of Man visas (indicative cost £855 per visa), and practical steps to evidence compliance; exemptions would require UK agreement and were not favoured. IOM officials indicated their willingness to support and guide the NI Producer Organisations and respond to any queries they may have.
- Operational items raised: unusual fishing patterns in Manx waters had been noted via satellite monitoring (details to be shared with Northern Ireland enforcement) and licence renewal timing/usage concerns (route via DEFA where needed).
- Ministers agreed to continue joint working and explore workable, evidence-based solutions.

Action: [REDACTED] **to follow up on the option for Isle of Man visas.**

Action: [REDACTED] **to liaise with [REDACTED] on queries regarding company fees/charges for visas.**

3. Fisheries and Environment

- Discussion covered cost pressures (including fuel) and the balance between fleet needs and decarbonisation/renewables ambitions.
- Western Irish Mud Belt and related evidence/research were noted; participants agreed any changes should be guided by the completed findings.
- Operational updates referenced perceived improvements in nephrops landings since the trial pot fishery began, as well as discussions around the possibility of additional fishing opportunities, should the result of the trial indicate that this might be sustainably accommodated. Both of these points would ultimately be considered further, at the end of the trial agreement to share data and keep Northern Ireland updated on relevant reviews (including the 2026 review), noting the Isle of Man political timetable (administration changes later in 2026).

4. DAERA items for discussion

- **Infrastructure:** The Northern Ireland delegation asked to be included as stakeholders; harbour dues / fees and consultation / engagement approach were discussed (noting planned increases broadly in line with CPI).
- **Scallops:** The Northern Ireland delegation welcomed previous engagement and praised Isle of Man management; both sides agreed to continue early engagement on any potential future changes.

5. Any other business

- None.

Meeting ended at 15:21.

Summary of meeting

- Both sides reaffirmed close working relations and commitment to continued joint working.
- Key focus was immigration compliance for migrant labour in the fishing fleet and practical, evidence-based options (including Isle of Man visas).
- Fisheries discussion covered cost pressures, environmental ambitions, and the need for decisions to be guided by the Western Irish Mud Belt evidence and forthcoming reviews.
- DAERA raised infrastructure engagement and future scallop management; early stakeholder engagement was agreed.

Actions:

- [REDACTED] to follow up on the Isle of Man visa option.
- [REDACTED] to liaise with [REDACTED] on company fees/charges for visas.



MINISTER'S PRE-BRIEF AND MEETING NOTE

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☐ PRE-BRIEF

☒ MEETING

INV / SUB Reference Number: INV-0121-2026

DATE OF MEETING: 21 APR 2026

TITLE/ORGANISATION:		Meeting with Michelle McIlveen MLA and Andrew McMurray MLA		
VENUE:				
☒ Parliament Buildings	☐ Clare House	☐ OTHER: Please specify location	☐ Virtual	☐ Hybrid
LIST OF ATTENDEES:				
☒ Minister	☒ SpAd	☒ PS	☐ APS	
OFFICIALS:	██████████ ██████████ ████████████████████			
External Attendees:	Michelle McIlveen MLA Andrew McMurray MLA Franka Winter Alliance Party			

KEY POINTS DISCUSSED:

- Minister welcomed attendees
- Officials summarised the outcome of the recent in-person meeting between the Minister and Isle of Man Ministers, including discussion of Isle of Man immigration rules as they apply to operations in Isle of Man waters.
- The potential for exemptions from Isle of Man work permit requirements for overseas crew on NI vessels was discussed. It was noted that such exemptions have previously been granted to other professions, only in limited circumstances and would involve significant monitoring resource, as well as agreement from the UK Home Office.
- [REDACTED] outlined that currently available routes of access by the NI fleet that were outlined by IoM officials, including the ability of vessel owners to register as a foreign business, which would enable overseas crew to apply for an Isle of Man Worker Migrant visa.
- Officials have briefed the industry on the outcome of the meeting and industry are considering the potential applicability of the Isle of Man Worker Migrant visa as a means of addressing crewing challenges within the NI fleet.
- There was a discussion around the cost of perusing this route and it was agreed that officials would explore the possibility of funding routes to assist.
- Other IoM issues were also discussed including harbour fees and mud closures and the recognition of the continued impact on the fleet. Minister highlighted that IoM Ministers apologised for not including NI stakeholders in previous consultations. IoM Department for Infrastructure is currently reviewing fee structure.
- The current cost of fuel was discussed. All agree that the increased fuel prices are impacting the industry. It was agreed that officials would explore crisis funding options.
- Marine Protected areas were discussed. [REDACTED] outlined that the offshore MPA areas have been designated by the Secretary of State in 2019 and it is the responsibility of the Department to bring forward management.
- Officials have had close and ongoing engagement with industry on this and recognise the challenges. Impact assessments have included the wider Irish Sea and have taken other spatial squeezes into consideration.

ISSUES AGREED: (must be completed)

- Agreement that the Isle of Man Worker Migrant visa, via foreign business registration, is currently the only viable route for overseas crew, though cost is a concern.
- Officials to explore potential funding options to support industry where costs present a barrier.
- Acknowledgement of ongoing pressures on the fleet arising from Isle of Man harbour fees, mud closures, and fuel costs, with officials to explore crisis funding options.
- Confirmation that Marine Protected Areas are a statutory responsibility of the Department, with assurance of continued engagement with industry and consideration of cumulative spatial impacts.

ACTION POINTS & OFFICIAL RESPONSIBLE:

- **ACTION 1: Isle of Man registration and visa:** Officials to fully explore whether any funding support for Isle of Man foreign business registration and Worker Migrant visa costs is permissible, and draft a Ministerial letter to Michelle McIlveen MLA and Andrew McMurray MLA setting out the outcome – [REDACTED]
- **ACTION 2: Fuel support:** Officials to assess the feasibility of providing fuel support to the fishing fleet, including via a Crisis Fund approach or schemes analogous to COVID-19 supports, and report back on options – [REDACTED]

Notes written by -

[REDACTED]

DATE:**21 Apr 2026**

Signed and Dated by most Senior Official in attendance: [REDACTED]
12/05/26 (PRINT NAME)

Signed and Dated by Minister/Private Secretary: [REDACTED]
26/5/26 _____



MINISTER'S PRE-BRIEF AND MEETING NOTE

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☐ PRE-BRIEF

☒ MEETING

INV-0313-2026

DATE OF MEETING: 22 April 2026

TITLE/ORGANISATION:		Meeting with Declan Kearney MLA and a delegation of representatives of commercial fishing industry on Lough Neagh - impacts of proposed eel fishing moratorium		
VENUE:				
☐ Parliament Buildings	☒ Clare House	☐ OTHER: Please specify location	☐ Virtual	☐ Hybrid
LIST OF ATTENDEES:				
☒ Minister	☒ SpAd	☒ PS	☐ APS	
OFFICIALS:	Owen Lyttle Director Marine and Fisheries Division [REDACTED] Deputy Director [REDACTED] Chief Fisheries Officer [REDACTED] Principal Fisheries Officer			
External Attendees:	[REDACTED] [REDACTED] AFBI [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED] AFBI Declan Kearney MLA			

	██████████ Fisherman
	██████████ Fisherman
	██████████ Fisherman
	██████████ Fisherman
	██████████ Fisherman's wife

KEY POINTS DISCUSSED:

TEXT ARIAL 12

- Declan Kearney MLA expressed concern with the communications from the Department to date and outlined how the Fishermen on Lough Neagh are not responsible for the ecological disaster. He highlighted two issues to be addressed: securing the livelihood of 150 fishers and ensuring the future of commercial fishing is maintained in a sustainable way.
- Fishermen outlined the catastrophic drop off in eel numbers and fat content problems.
- AFBI provided an overview of the science behind the decline in stocks since the 1980s and information on the current fat content and relevance for migration.
- Financial support discussed: timescales, potential moratorium, options, and budget constraints.
- Officials outlined that recent discussions with Lough Neagh Fishermen's Co-operative Society and fishers needed further exploration and that the qualifying criteria need careful consideration before being presented to the Minister.
- Minister also outlined the need to ensure ethical engagement for this process and asked for suggestions on how to ensure all parties are included in the engagement.

ISSUES AGREED: (must be completed)

- The problem with sustainability of the Lough Neagh Eel is complex and, if not addressed, could have a detrimental impact on the community, heritage and long-term viability of eel fishing.
- Discussions and proposals going forward should consider:
 - Managing the transition to sustainability while supporting fishers' livelihoods
 - Ensuring commercial fishing is environmentally sustainable and compliant with regulatory obligations
- Any options or package of measures proposed should be fair, evidence-based, robust and stand up to external scrutiny.

ACTION POINTS & OFFICIAL RESPONSIBLE:

- **ACTION 1: DAERA TO DEVELOP OPTIONS FOR POTENTIAL PACKAGES OF SUPPORT FOR THE EEL FISHERY – [REDACTED]**

Notes written by – [REDACTED]

DATE:

28 April 2026

Signed and Dated by most Senior Official in attendance OWEN LYTTLE

Signed and Dated by Minister/Private Secretary: [REDACTED]

5/5/26 _____



MINISTER'S PRE-BRIEF AND MEETING NOTE

It is the business area's responsibility for keeping a CM record of the final agreed note.

☐ PRE-BRIEF

☒ MEETING

INV-0009-2026 : Meeting with Lee Reynolds, Commissioner for the Ulster Scots and Ulster British Tradition (Cross Ref: SUB-1390-2025)

DATE OF MEETING: 5 MAY 2026

TITLE/ORGANISATION:		Meeting with Lee Reynolds, Commissioner for the Ulster Scots and Ulster British Tradition		
VENUE:				
☒ Parliament Buildings	☐ Clare House	☐ OTHER:	☐ Virtual	☐ Hybrid
LIST OF ATTENDEES:				
☒ Minister	☒ SpAd	☐ PS	☒ APS	
OFFICIALS:	Jason Foy, Director Rural Affairs [REDACTED], Capacity Capability, Equality and Diversity Branch			
External Attendees:	Lee Reynolds, Commissioner for the Ulster Scots and Ulster British Tradition. [REDACTED]			

KEY POINTS DISCUSSED:

- Minister welcomed Commissioner Reynolds to Assembly Buildings and introduced officials present in the meeting room as well as those attending virtually.
- Commissioner Reynolds began by outlining his plans and advised that he was prioritising education with Ulster Scots, focusing on identity, language and integration in rural areas.
- The Commissioner advised that his responsibilities covered language, literature and arts. He described his role as a champion for Ulster British and his work to provide guidance for NICS departments on their roles regarding these areas.
- Jason Foy provided the Commissioner with an overview of Rural NI: Our New Approach 2026-2041 which is out for consultation until 1 June 2026. He noted engagement events that have taken place and advised that to date there has been little presence of Ulster Scots community. He also advised that from the past number of events it was clear that rural communities placed a lot of importance on their identity and heritage. He also advised there are proposals within the consultation that would be of interest to the Commissioner.
- Jason Foy also discussed the Rural Micro Capital Grants Scheme which offers grants of between £500 and £2,000 to rural community-led, voluntary organisations for projects tackling issues of local poverty and / or social isolation, which could be availed of.
- Commissioner Reynolds discussed the rural communities where Ulster Scots is prevalent, followed by discussions on volunteering in community groups; the different activities the community groups undertake throughout NI; and how can they be supported by DAERA.
- Commissioner Reynolds also advised that he was keen to ensure he engaged with the younger generation and for their needs to be embedded into government policies. Commissioner Reynolds highlighted that his focus will be on culture, and attendees all agreed of the need to support his work as matters progressed.

ISSUES AGREED: (must be completed)

- Attendees all agreed of the need to support the work of the Commissioner as matters progress.

ACTION POINTS & OFFICIAL RESPONSIBLE:

- **ACTION 1:** Jason Foy will share the Rural NI: Our New Approach 2026-2041 consultation with Commissioner Reynolds. **ACTION – Jason Foy (completed 11 May 2026)**

Notes written by – [REDACTED]

DATE: 6 May 2026

Signed and Dated by most Senior Official in attendance: Jason Foy 11 May 2026

Signed and Dated by Minister/Private Secretary: [REDACTED] 11/05/26



MINISTER'S PRE-BRIEF AND MEETING NOTE

It is the business area's responsibility for keeping a CM record of the final agreed note.

☐ PRE-BRIEF

☒ MEETING

INV / SUB Reference Number: INV-0005-2026 : Meeting with Pól Deeds, Irish Language Commissioner (Cross Ref: SUB-1390-2025)

DATE OF MEETING: 11 MAY 2026

TITLE/ORGANISATION:		Meeting with Pól Deeds, Irish Language Commissioner		
VENUE:				
☒ Parliament Buildings	☐ Clare House	☐ OTHER: Please specify location	☐ Virtual	☐ Hybrid
LIST OF ATTENDEES:				
☒ Minister	☒ SpAd	☒ PS	☐ APS	
OFFICIALS:	[REDACTED] Capability, Equality and Diversity			
External Attendees	Pól Deeds, Irish Language Commissioner Terry Curran, Director of Policy.			
KEY POINTS DISCUSSED:				
Commissioner Deeds provided an introduction to his role and outlined progress on the development of best practice standards. He advised that these standards will go to full public consultation in September 2026, with a view to being approved by the First Minister and deputy First Minister in December 2026. Once agreed, all departments and public bodies will be required to have due regard to them.				

- Minister Muir discussed Rural NI: Our New Approach 2026-2041 which is out for consultation until 1 June 2026 and highlighted how the findings may inform future funding and investment in rural communities.
- Commissioner Deeds outlined the application of the European Charter for Regional and Minority Languages, including the distinctions between Irish and Ulster Scots under the Charter. He noted that Department for Communities guidance is available to inform best practice.
- Commissioner Deeds discussed potential plans to relocate from Equality House and possible locations that may better support the delivery of his statutory role.
- [REDACTED] outlined the department's representation with [REDACTED] on the Identity and Language (Northern Ireland) Act 2022 working group led by DfC.
- Commissioner Deeds provided an update on the status of the strategy as he understood it, and the next steps for its approval.
- Commissioner Deeds highlighted the links between Irish and Ulster Scots languages, ecological knowledge and place-names across Northern Ireland, and expressed an interest in exploring potential future collaboration with DAERA in this area.

ISSUES AGREED: (must be completed)

- It was agreed that DAERA would share the *Rural NI: Our New Approach 2026–2041* consultation with Commissioner Deeds and welcome any feedback he may have.

ACTION POINTS & OFFICIAL RESPONSIBLE:

- **ACTION 1:** [REDACTED] to send Commissioner Deeds details of the Rural NI: Our New Approach 2026-2041

Notes written by -

[REDACTED]

DATE:

12 May 2026

Signed and Dated by most Senior Official in attendance: [REDACTED] (PRINT NAME)

Signed and Dated by Minister/Private Secretary: _____
21/5/26 _____



MINISTER'S PRE-BRIEF AND MEETING NOTE

It is the business area's responsibility for keeping a CM record of the final agreed note.

☐ PRE-BRIEF

☒ MEETING

INV / SUB Reference Number: INV-0308-2026

DATE OF MEETING: 12 MAY 2026

TITLE/ORGANISATION:		Meeting with [REDACTED] [REDACTED] Mark Horton (The Rivers Trust) to discuss aims to tackle sewage pollution and improve water quality		
VENUE:				
☐ Parliament Buildings	☐ Clare House	☐ OTHER: Please specify location	☐ Virtual	☒ Hybrid
LIST OF ATTENDEES:				
☒ Minister	☒ SpAd	☒ PS	☐ APS	
OFFICIALS:	[REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED]			
External Attendees:	Mark Horton			

KEY POINTS DISCUSSED:

1. Nutrients Action Programme (NAP)

Mark Horton noted that good progress was made by the Task and Finish Group, which is now moving toward agreement on final outcomes. These will be brought to the Minister for consideration. He noted that this approach has proven effective and could be replicated in other areas of policy development.

Minister Muir stressed the importance of enabling a just transition for the farming community. He referred to ongoing discussions with the Irish Government on delivering shared outcomes and noted that future delivery of sustainable catchment approaches will rely on commitments and investment from multiple sectors, not agriculture alone.

2. Wastewater and Sewage Pollution

Minister Muir confirmed he delivered a statement to the Assembly on 3 March, setting out his intention to strengthen the regulation of water pollution. He noted that public discourse remains heavily focused on agriculture, with insufficient attention given to wastewater pollution. He emphasised the need to change this narrative and discussed how we can work together to highlight sewage pollution as a key issue.

Mark Horton acknowledged that gaps in EDM and wastewater investment primarily sit with DfI. Engagement with DfI indicates these issues will be considered within PC28, albeit with a constrained budget. He flagged that wastewater pollution is harder to prioritise publicly, as it is not directly paid for by the public and is often perceived as an agricultural issue.

Mark noted that the Rivers Trust will publish its *State of Our Rivers* report later this year, which could highlight the scale of sewage pollution. He also raised concerns that DAERA may be under-resourced to regulate effectively, citing examples where slurry movements appear compliant on paper but are not occurring in practice.

Mark noted that DfI cannot fund all wastewater improvements and prioritisation of resources is essential. There is a need for stronger joint working between DAERA and DfI to achieve multiple benefits, including the consultation on urban drainage in housing developments.

Mark asked whether DAERA/DfI meetings could be open to external stakeholders. [REDACTED] advised this would depend on the agenda but suggested that call-for-evidence workshops could provide an appropriate engagement route, which [REDACTED] will raise at the next meeting.

3. Planning Applications and Environmental Constraints

The Minister reflected on council planning applications where DAERA is a consultee, noting that discussions often occur in a vacuum. He highlighted the disconnect between protecting water bodies and facilitating new development, and that refusals are often perceived as planning issues rather than being linked to NI Water capacity constraints.

Mark Horton emphasised the need to improve public understanding of the environmental, health and economic impacts of poor water quality, and the limits of what planning decisions can address. He queried whether sufficient evidence exists on the cost of not protecting the water environment, including impacts on public health and the economy. He suggested this could form an environmental challenge project for the Rivers Trust.

There was agreement on the importance of working collectively to raise the profile of sewage pollution and to accelerate the rollout of EDMs across the wastewater network, drawing on lessons learned from England in addressing both storm and dry-weather spills.

ISSUES AGREED: (must be completed)

- It may be useful to open DAERA/DfI meetings to external stakeholders.

ACTION POINTS & OFFICIAL RESPONSIBLE:

- **ACTION 1:** [REDACTED] to raise the idea of call for evidence workshops at the next meeting with DfI – [REDACTED]

Notes written by -

[REDACTED]

DATE:

13 MAY 2026

Signed and Dated by most Senior Official in attendance: [REDACTED]

Signed and Dated by Minister/Private Secretary: [REDACTED]



MINISTER'S MEETING NOTE

☐ PRE-BRIEF

☒ MEETING

INV / SUB Reference Number: INV-0202-2026

DATE OF MEETING: 22 MAY 2026

TITLE/ORGANISATION:		Meeting with Foyle MLAs, local MPs, the Mayor and CEO of Derry City and Strabane District Council and NI Water to update on the consultation responses		
VENUE:				
☐ Parliament Buildings	☐ Clare House	☒ OTHER: Jubilee House	☐ Virtual	☐ Hybrid
LIST OF ATTENDEES:				
☒ Minister	☒ SpAd	☒ PS	☐ APS	
OFFICIALS:	Richard Crowe, [REDACTED]			
External Attendees:	Gregory Campbell, MP; Mark H Durkan, MLA; Ciara Ferguson, MLA; Sinead McLaughlin, MLA; Cllr. Ruairi McHugh, Mayor; John Kelpie, Chief Executive DCSDC; Gary Curran, NI Water; Karen Phillips, DCSDC; [REDACTED]			
KEY POINTS DISCUSSED:				
- Minister to consider further engagement with Elected Members of Derry City and Strabane District Council (DCSDC) - Minister expressed gratitude for the consultation responses received and acknowledged that the extensive response submitted by DCSDC was very welcome. - The updated draft Remediation Strategy approval process is ongoing, and cost estimate work progressing.				

- The Business case for delivery of the works will include updated, evidence based and robust cost estimates.
- No formal bids have been made to the Finance Minister as the quantum is still unknown. The Minister has engaged with the current and previous Finance Minister on the issue.
- Any engagement with Treasury will be led by the Finance Minister.
- Further engagement with MLAs, via teams, over the summer recess before a final decision is taken on adoption of the draft strategy. The Minister will consider and decide whether to refer adoption of the strategy to the Executive.
- The Environmental Monitoring Programme (EMP) is continuing, to ensure drinking water quality.
- The Minister acknowledged public concern around fly-tipping, unauthorised access and anti-social behaviour at the site and expressed thanks to all engaged in the multi-agency response
- Proceeds of Crime proceedings remain ongoing.
- Engagement ongoing with DfI Roads A6 Project team.
- At the point where remediation works can commence, these works will take a number of years.
- Costs will be resource rather than capital, creating additional budget pressures.
- A presentation on consultation outcomes, ongoing work and next steps was delivered.
- Discussion on the risk to water quality – explained the extensive EMP in place and the continuing assessment of risk to the river Faughan.
- Process to be followed before site can be vested.
- After adoption of the final Remediation Strategy and business case approval, there will be a procurement process to be followed before any works commence.
- Ongoing community engagement commended and important it continues.
- Following DCSDC investigation into noise complaints, a Noise Abatement Notice was issued on 21 May 2026.
- Request to consider joined up approach of both the Mobuoy Project and the DfI A6 project, with a view to exploring potential capitalisation of elements of the work.
- Objective to create a community asset – engagement on future use discussed.
- Market engagement for works – this will require pre-market engagement as part of any procurement process.
- Discussion on the potential to phase works – looking at prioritisation based on risk.
- Consideration of vesting will form part of future decision making.
- PDF of presentation delivered during meeting attached as Annex.

ISSUES AGREED:

- Minister agreed that further engagement will take place once the cost estimate work is complete.
- Minister agreed that engagement with the Finance Minister will be progressed once the cost estimates are finalised.
- Minister agreed that he will be making a decision on whether he will be bringing the adoption of the strategy to the Executive.

ACTION POINTS & OFFICIAL RESPONSIBLE:

- **ACTION 1:** Minister to consider further engagement with the Elected Members of DCSDC via a Teams call with Party Group Leaders. **ACTION** [REDACTED]
- **ACTION 2:** Teams call with Foyle MLAs, MPs, Mayor and CEO, to be arranged during Summer Recess, once Minister has sight of the completed cost estimates for delivery of the draft Remediation Strategy. **ACTION** [REDACTED]

Notes written by – [REDACTED]

DATE: 22 May 2026

**Signed and Dated by most Senior Official in attendance: RICHARD CROWE
28/05/2026**

Signed and Dated by Minister: ANDREW MUIR MLA 08/06/2026



Department of
**Agriculture, Environment
and Rural Affairs**

An Roinn

**Talmhaíochta, Comhshaoil
agus Gnóthaí Tuaithe**

Deparlment o'

**Fairmin, Environment
an' Kintra Matthers**

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MINISTER'S PRE-BRIEF AND MEETING NOTE

It is the business area's responsibility for keeping a CM record of the final agreed note.

☐ PRE-BRIEF

☒ MEETING

INV-0352-2026

DATE OF MEETING: 08 JUNE 2026

TITLE/ORGANISATION:		Request for a meeting with Michelle McIlveen MLA to discuss agricultural policy for the remainder of this mandate		
VENUE:				
☒ Parliament Buildings (Room 21)	☐ Clare House	☐ OTHER: Please specify location	☐ Virtual	☐ Hybrid
LIST OF ATTENDEES:				
☒ Minister	☐ SpAd	☒ PS	☐ APS	
OFFICIALS:	Martin McKendry – Head of FFRAG Richard Johnston – Director, Agricultural Policy [REDACTED] – Press Office			
External Attendees:	Michelle McIlveen MLA – DUP Gareth Wilson MLA – DUP Tom Buchanan MLA - DUP			

KEY POINTS DISCUSSED:

Private Members Bill (PMB) – Areas of Natural Constraint (ANC)

- The PMB – ANC was discussed and issues raised included budgetary and resource pressures, current and future policy areas within the Sustainable Agriculture Programme (SAP) aligned with farms in the areas targeted under the ANC payment proposal.

UPDATE ON SHEEP SCHEME

- Scheme development work was ongoing with key stakeholders and the potential key pillars focussed on genetics, animal health and environmental management.

NAP

- Task & Finish Group were due to finalise proposals which ensured alignment on improved nutrient management with the policy areas of improved water and air quality.
- Consultation to commence on proposals before summer recess.

MARINE PROTECTION ZONES

- There was a statutory requirement to consult. Minister fully understood the challenges.

HYDRO OPERATORS

- Minister will respond to Tom Buchanan's AQWs on hydro operators.

PIG SECTOR PRESSURES

- There was concern around a number of pig supply contracts not being renewed by Sofina Foods.
- Discussions were ongoing to gain a better understanding of the situation.

ANAEROBIC DIGESTION

There was a brief discussion on anaerobic digestion and its potential to provide a sustainable solution across nutrient recovery, biomethane production and horticulture production.

LOUGH NEAGH EELS

- It was important to maintain stocks for the long-term.
- Issues pre-dated blue/green algae blooms and there had been significant engagement with stakeholders.
- A support scheme was under consideration.

ISSUES AGREED: (must be completed)

- It would be useful to present sheep scheme proposals early autumn;
- Communication on next stages of NAP needed to be carefully considered including the potential for criticism on a summer consultation when NI Assembly in recess.

ACTION POINTS & OFFICIAL RESPONSIBLE:

Notes written by –

DATE:

15 June 2026

**Signed and Dated by most Senior Official in attendance: Martin McKendry –
16/06/2026**

Signed and Dated by Minister/Private Secretary: _____



MINISTER'S PRE-BRIEF AND MEETING NOTE

It is the business area's responsibility for keeping a CM record of the final agreed note.

☐ PRE-BRIEF

☒ MEETING

MEETING NOTE: 16 June 2026

INV Number: INV-0083-2026

TITLE/ORGANISATION:		Quarterly meeting with UFU		
VENUE:	☒ Parliament Buildings	☐ Clare House	☐ OTHER:	☐ Virtual
LIST OF ATTENDEES:				
☒ Minister	☒ SpAd	☒ PS	☒ APS	
OFFICIALS:	Katrina Godfrey Martin McKendry			
OTHERS:	Conall Donnelly- Chief Executive Glen Cuddy- Deputy President of UFU			
KEY POINTS DISCUSSED:				
The Minister welcomed the continued engagement with UFU representatives and reaffirmed his commitment to working constructively with the sector going forward. The following issues were discussed: • Termination of pig supply contracts by Sofina foods ltd • Broader agricultural policy - Farm Business improvement scheme (FBIS)				

- Farming with Nature (FwN) - Farming for the Generations - Areas of Natural Constraints Bill - Carbon Auditing/ Footprinting - Bovine Genetics Programme • Nutrients Action Programme (NAP) • Ammonia/ Planning • Wastewater Infrastructure & SORPI • Plant Protection products • Prescribed burning season • UK/EU Reset • bTB wildlife consultation • Sheep carcase classification and price reporting	
ISSUES AGREED: (must be completed) • Concerns were raised regarding Sofina Foods' decision to terminate contracts with farmers, with recognition of the significant impact on affected businesses and the need for clarity on implications and next steps. • Clear, timely and co-ordinated communications with the farming sector on departmental policies and schemes will be critical, with a strong emphasis on maintaining a "no surprises" approach. • The need to further explore end-of-pipe solutions to address nutrient and emissions challenges. • UFU will consider and seek views on access to plant protection products and will share its position with Food, Farming and Rural Affairs Group (FFRAG) officials.	
ACTION POINTS / OFFICIAL RESPONSIBLE: ACTION 1: Ministerial meeting to be arranged with Sofina Foods to discuss pig supply contracts - Private Office	
Notes written by - ██████████	Date: 16/6/2026

Signed and Dated by Lead Policy Official:

Katrina Godfrey

5 July 2026

Signed and Dated by Private Secretary: ██████████



MINISTER'S PRE-BRIEF AND MEETING NOTE

It is the business area's responsibility for keeping a CM record of the final agreed note.

☐ PRE-BRIEF

☒ MEETING

INV / SUB Reference Number: INV-0135-2026

DATE OF MEETING: 17 JUNE 2026

TITLE/ORGANISATION:	Lough Neagh Stakeholder Forum			
VENUE:				
☐ Parliament Buildings	☒ Clare House	☐ OTHER: Please specify location	☐ Virtual	☐ Hybrid
LIST OF ATTENDEES:				
☒ Minister	☐ SpAd	☒ PS	☐ APS	
OFFICIALS:	Julie Thompson [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED]			
External Attendees:	Taro Takahashi – Co-Centre for Climate + Biodiversity + Water Michael Armstrong – Department for Infrastructure Karen Arbuckle – Lough Neagh Development Trust Gary McErlain & Gerry Darby – Lough Neagh Partnership Conor Jordan – Lough Neagh Sand Traders Elmarie Swanepoel – National Trust Bróna McNeill, Max Bryant (NIEL CEO) James Lowe & Kevin Lagan – NIAPA			

	Gary Curran – Northern Ireland Water Anne-Marie Campbell, – Solace NI Ray McKeeman – Ulster Angling Federation Aileen Lawson & Glenn Cuddy – UFU
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KEY POINTS DISCUSSED:

Introduction

- Minister opened the meeting and invited introductions from those in attendance. Minister noted that the future format of the forum will be discussed in AOB.

Action Plan Update

- Action plan update delivered to the group by [REDACTED], noting that three actions have been closed since the last forum meeting. There are now 23 actions complete and 14 progressing.
- There was some discussion on the ongoing actions.
- Bróna McNeil raised query regarding action 8 and the river basin management plan. [REDACTED] stated that workshops have been set up as part of a wider stakeholder engagement plan and a draft consultation is scheduled for December. There is a plan in place to keep stakeholders engaged moving forward with a flexible approach. A cross Departmental Board is in place at present.
- Bróna McNeill requested an update on the progress of Action 6 in relation to the Conservation Management Plans.
- Minister explained that the water quality awareness campaign will focus on misconnections, septic tanks and pollution.
- Minister provided an update that Action 32 in relation to Fines and Penalties for environmental crime which is due to be presented to the Assembly for second stage.

Discussion

- Gary McErlain highlighted a QUB report on the effectiveness of buffer zones. There was a brief conversation about the Sustainable Catchment Programme, and the use of adaptable buffer zones and run off risk maps.
- Conor Jordan asked if there were any further updates on sand extraction in the Lough, following the Queens report publication. Conor stated that impact assessments previously undertaken were supported by a body of research
- [REDACTED] noted that the Co-Centre are actively considering sand dredging impacts and that the universities may draw up their own research in this field. DAERA to share a reference list detailing existing evidence used in current studies with Conor.

- Elmarie Swanepoel raised a query about whether we are reaching out to the public to update them on the work being progressed by the Department. Agreed that the DAERA website will be reviewed to ensure updates are available.

Northern Ireland Water Presentation

- NI Water presentation was delivered to the group by Gary Curran.
- It was recognised that there is not one sole contributor to the ecological challenges, but a series of factors influencing the current health of the Lough.
- Gary McErlain highlighted previous issues experienced at Ballyronan Marina in relation to wastewater infrastructure.
- NI Water highlighted that an extensive investment plan is underway including investment in Ballyronan.
- Bróna McNeill raised a query around the process for allocating funding. Gary Curran confirmed that a holistic approach is currently used considering a range of criteria. Preparation for the next budget period is being prepared for submission to DfI for consideration.

Lough Neagh Partnership Presentation

- Lough Neagh Partnership presentation was delivered by Gerry Darby focussed on the LN Heritage Resilience report and the importance of this for the Lough

AOB - Future of the Forum

- Minister invited views on the future of the LN stakeholder forum. There was general agreement that the forum in its current format has been very useful.
- Options to be discussed at the next meeting.

ACTION POINTS & OFFICIAL RESPONSIBLE:

- **Lough Neagh Delivery & Governance Team – to request an update on CMP status to be shared with Bróna of NIEL.**
- **Lough Neagh Delivery & Governance Team – to share the presentations delivered with the group.**
- **██████████ CSAO - to send a reference list detailing existing evidence available in relation to sand dredging activities to Conor Jordan.**
- **Lough Neagh Delivery & Governance Team – to update the DAERA webpage for Lough Neagh.**

Notes written by -

[REDACTED]

DATE:

24 06 2026

**Signed and Dated by most Senior Official in attendance: Julie Thompson –
25.06.2026**

**Signed and Dated by Minister/Private Secretary: [REDACTED]
17/7/26 _____**



MINISTER'S PRE-BRIEF AND MEETING NOTE

It is the business area's responsibility for keeping a CM record of the final agreed note.

☐ PRE-BRIEF

☒ MEETING

INV / SUB Reference Number: INV-0346-2026 / SUB-0460-2026

DATE OF MEETING: 17 JUNE 2026

TITLE/ORGANISATION:		Meeting with the NI Land Use Working Group (LUWG) to thank them for their contribution to the " <i>Land of Plenty?</i> " report and advise them of the Department's proposed next steps		
VENUE:				
☐ Parliament Buildings	☒ Clare House	☐ OTHER: Please specify location	☐ Virtual	☐ Hybrid
LIST OF ATTENDEES:				
☒ Minister	☒ SpAd	☒ PS	☐ APS	
OFFICIALS:	• Neelia Lloyd (NEPD) • [REDACTED] (NEPD) • [REDACTED] (LULUC Branch) • [REDACTED] (LULUC Branch) • [REDACTED] (Press Office)			
External Attendees:	• [REDACTED], LUWG / Food, Farming & Countryside Commission (FFCC) • [REDACTED] – Department for Infrastructure (DfI) • [REDACTED] – Department for the Economy (DfE) • [REDACTED] – Northern Ireland Water • [REDACTED] – Ulster Farmers' Union ([REDACTED])			

	• [REDACTED] – Northern Ireland Environment Link (NIEL) • [REDACTED] – FFCC • [REDACTED] – Involve • [REDACTED] – Queen’s University Belfast (former) • [REDACTED] – Agri-Food and Biosciences Institute (AFBI)
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KEY POINTS DISCUSSED:

- The LUWG Chair reflected on developments in land use policy across the UK, noting that Northern Ireland is currently the only UK jurisdiction without a Land Use Framework and that completion of the LUWG report presents an opportunity to progress this work.
- The Group noted that publication of the report has been delayed to allow updates to JNCC-related material, with publication expected in July 2026.
- Minister Muir thanked members for their contribution and acknowledged the LUWG report as a significant contribution to thinking on land use in Northern Ireland. He recognised the complexity and sensitivity of land use issues and welcomed the independent, collaborative approach taken by the Group.
- Minister Muir emphasised that the Department’s approach will be phased, evidence-based and practical, and noted that the report contains a number of recommendations which will require careful consideration. He outlined three proposed next steps: establishment of a LULUC Stakeholder Forum; development of a Land Use Framework project plan; and continued strengthening of science, data and evidence capability.
- There was general support for progressing a Land Use Framework to address increasing and competing pressures on land. It was noted that any framework should support more joined-up decision-making without being spatially prescriptive.
- Minister Muir confirmed support for the LUWG’s work, while noting that the report does not constitute DAERA policy. It was acknowledged that some aspects of the report may be considered controversial, but this should not prevent progress.
- Discussion highlighted the need for further stakeholder engagement, effective communications and alignment with wider statutory and policy commitments as work progresses.
- Participants discussed the importance of recognising trade-offs in land use, including ecosystem services, and ensuring that future work is informed by diverse perspectives.
- The proposed LULUC Stakeholder Forum was discussed, including the importance of inclusive engagement, Just Transition, the potential role of an independent chair, and the need to define its purpose, structure and membership.
- Wider governance and political considerations were noted, alongside the importance of ensuring that the LUWG report informs future work.
- Minister Muir emphasised the importance of agreeing communications in advance of publication and engaging LUWG members as part of this process.

He confirmed that DAERA will publish the LUWG report on the Department's website and lead associated communications and press activity.

ISSUES AGREED: (must be completed)

- The LUWG report is a valuable contribution and will inform future work on land use policy in Northern Ireland.
- A phased, evidence-based approach will be taken to progressing the report's recommendations.
- Further stakeholder engagement will be progressed, including through development of a LULUC Stakeholder Forum.
- The Department will progress work towards development of a Land Use Framework, aligned with existing commitments.
- Strengthening science, data and evidence will be central to future land use decision-making.
- DAERA will publish the LUWG report on the Department's website and lead associated communications and press activity.

ACTION POINTS & OFFICIAL RESPONSIBLE:

- **ACTION 1: Develop communications approach and press materials for publication of the LUWG report, in engagement with LUWG members – LULUC Branch**
- **ACTION 2: Progress publication of the LUWG report on the DAERA website and lead associated communications activity – LULUC Branch**
- **ACTION 3: Develop proposals for establishment of a LULUC Stakeholder Forum – LULUC Branch**
- **ACTION 4: Progress development of a Land Use Framework project plan – LULUC Branch**
- **ACTION 5: Continue work to strengthen data, science and evidence capability to support land use policy – Relevant DAERA officials**

Notes written by:

██████████

DATE:

17 June 2026

Signed and Dated by most Senior Official in attendance: Neelia Lloyd
(PRINT NAME)

Signed and Dated by Minister/Private Secretary: 25/6/26



MINISTER'S PRE-BRIEF AND MEETING NOTE

It is the business area's responsibility for keeping a CM record of the final agreed note.

☐ PRE-BRIEF

☒ MEETING

INV Reference Number: INV-0461-2026

DATE OF MEETING: 22 JUN 2026

TITLE/ORGANISATION:		Meeting with PSNI and Environmental Crime Unit regarding Meridi Street / PSNI		
VENUE:				
☐ Parliament Buildings	☐ Clare House	☒ OTHER: PSNI Headquarters, Brooklyn, 65 Knock Road, Belfast, BT5 6LE	☐ Virtual	☐ Hybrid
LIST OF ATTENDEES:				
☒ Minister	☒ SpAd	☒ PS	☐ APS	
OFFICIALS:	██ ██			
External Attendees:	PSNI Assistant Chief Constable Ryan Henderson Responsible for Local Policing Command. PSNI Superintendent, ██████████ Local Policing Belfast City Policing District.			

KEY POINTS DISCUSSED:

- Role of NIEA with regards to bonfires around flytipped waste. Role of NIEA and council to remove waste depending on circumstances.
- Background to the Meridi Street Bonfire, and the work that was done last year and again this year.
- Adjournment of the Judicial review until October 2026.
- The Minister's views on the application of relevant legislation and the protection of the environment and public health were noted.
- The role of PSNI in relation to bonfires and responses to requests for assistance was discussed.
- Engagement with pallet companies and issues relating to the reporting of concerns were discussed.
- Need for political leadership and that accurate info is provided to the public.
- The discussion considered NIEA's role in addressing hazardous material in the weeks ahead. Practical considerations relating to site access and the removal of materials were discussed, including partnership working where appropriate.
- Operational arrangements for the removal of material from contentious sites were discussed, including examples of approaches adopted by partner organisations.
- The benefits of drones were discussed to view sites without being in close proximity.
- The importance of future proofing and communicating. The benefits of a MOU with PSNI similar to the MOU [REDACTED] has with PSNI.

ISSUES AGREED: (must be completed)

- The importance of future planning, communication and partnership working
- Importance of Information sharing between NIEA and PSNI

ACTION POINTS & OFFICIAL RESPONSIBLE:

- **ACTION 1:** NIEA to consider seeking drone footage of bonfire sites.
ACTION – [REDACTED]
- **ACTION 2:** [REDACTED] to arrange a DAC to resolve contractor issue. **ACTION –**
[REDACTED]
- **ACTION 3:** NIEA to investigate a formal information sharing MOU with PSNI similar to that between PSNI and [REDACTED]. **ACTION –**
[REDACTED]

Notes written by – [REDACTED]

DATE:**24 Jun 2026****[Complete as appropriate]****Signed and Dated by most Senior Official in attendance:** [REDACTED] **29/06/26****Signed and Dated by Minister/Private Secretary:** [REDACTED]
17/7/26_____



MINISTER'S PRE-BRIEF AND MEETING NOTE

It is the business area's responsibility for keeping a CM record of the final agreed note.

☐ PRE-BRIEF

☒ MEETING

INV / SUB Reference Number: INV-0252-2026

DATE OF MEETING: 22 JUNE 2026

TITLE/ORGANISATION:		Chris Brown – O'Connor Ireland, Tim Halley & Michelle Hatfield – Belfast City Airport		
VENUE:				
☒ Parliament Buildings	☐ Clare House	☐ OTHER: Please specify location	☐ Virtual	☐ Hybrid
LIST OF ATTENDEES:				
☒ Minister	☒ SpAd	☒ PS	☐ APS	
OFFICIALS:	Claire Cockerill (CC) (Director of Climate Action Delivery Division) [REDACTED] Emissions Trading Scheme, Carbon Pricing & Windsor Framework) [REDACTED] (Strategic CAP Communications and Governance Support Branch)			
External Attendees:	Chris Brown (CB) – Director & Founder, Brown O'Connor Ireland Tim Halley (TH) – Director of Development, Belfast City Airport Michelle Hatfield (MH), Chief People Officer, Belfast City Airport			

KEY POINTS DISCUSSED:

- MH outlined Belfast City Airport Master Plan 2040, which was launched in September 2025 for an 8-week consultation. The final Master Plan was published in March 2026.
- TH outlined the next steps: Infrastructure and gateway terminal buildings applications with Belfast city council to meet growing passenger demand (Target of 7 million passengers). A Planning variation application would be submitted seeking permission to increase annual aircraft movements: from 48,000 to 61,000 by 2030. This would include extending operating hours by 60 minutes - currently between 06.30-21.30. Using newer generation of airplanes, more energy efficient and quieter. Updated Plan publication scheduled for Autumn 2026.
- TH advised that transport priorities include improving public transport modal share. Engagement ongoing with Translink. Key opportunities are direct service to airport terminal, development of a rail halt and enhanced connectivity to Belfast City Centre.

Key issues discussed included:

- Potential for existing halt upgrades (noting importance to local community of maintaining Sydenham halt) and additional halt directly adjacent to the airport.
- The need for alignment with climate targets and finding the balance between airport expansion and emissions reduction. BCA £200 million investment supporting net zero ambitions. Actions include: electrification of airside fleet and increased renewable energy usage; exploring airline incentives for cleaner aircraft and role in next-generation aviation technologies.
- Importance of recognising noise concerns, actions include: monitoring and reporting, penalties for noisier aircraft and ongoing engagement with communities. Additional flexibility beyond current hours is a community concern. Proposal was limited extension primarily to accommodate delayed flights.
- Coordination between all three NI airports with focus on protecting regional connectivity, collaborative working alongside airports and Belfast Harbour. Recognition that each airport has a distinct role.
- Three, now closed, Emissions Trading Scheme consultations relevant to the aviation sector which the Airport has engaged on, and noted ongoing communication between the Airport and officials with respect to regional connectivity.

Minister thanked attendees for the discussion and emphasised the importance of balancing growth with environmental responsibilities, maintaining community confidence and strengthening regional connectivity.

ISSUES AGREED: (must be completed)

- Belfast City Airport to continue to engage with DAERA/NIEA with respect to required environmental permissions and assessments arising from progression of Masterplan.

ACTION POINTS & OFFICIAL RESPONSIBLE:

- None

Notes written by –



DATE:

26 June 2026

Signed and Dated by most Senior Official in attendance: _CLAIRE COCKERILL**Signed and Dated by Minister/Private Secretary: _____****17/7/26** _____



MINISTER'S PRE-BRIEF AND MEETING NOTE

It is the business area's responsibility for keeping a CM record of the final agreed note.

☐ PRE-BRIEF

☒ MEETING

MEETING NOTE: 22 June 2026

INV Number: INV-0476-2026

TITLE/ORGANISATION:		Follow up meeting with UFU		
VENUE:	☒ Parliament Buildings	☐ Clare House	☐ OTHER:	☐ Virtual
LIST OF ATTENDEES:				
☒ Minister	☒ SpAd	☒ PS	☐ APS	
OFFICIALS:	Martin McKendry (MS TEAMS)			
OTHERS:	John McLenaghan- President of UFU			
KEY POINTS DISCUSSED:				
The Minister welcomed the continued engagement with UFU and reaffirmed his commitment to working constructively with John as the new president of UFU going forward. The following issues were discussed: • Nutrients Action Programme (NAP) • Ammonia/ Planning				

• Wastewater/ SORPI • Shared Island Funding • Sustainable Farm Investment Scheme (SFIS) • Lough Neagh Stakeholder Forum • Fisheries and Water Environment Bill • Friends of the Earth report on pigs and poultry • Sustainable agricultural policy (SAP) - Farm Business improvement scheme (FBIS) - Farming with Nature (FwN) - Farming for the Generations - Areas of Natural Constraints Bill - Carbon Auditing/ Footprinting - Bovine Genetics Programme • James Hutton Institute • bTB wildlife consultation • Climate Action Plan (CAP) • Soil Nutrient health scheme • Sheep Support & Areas of Natural Constraint (ANC) Bill • Plant Protection Products	
ISSUES AGREED: (must be completed) • NAP proposals must meet legal requirements, be deliverable at farm level, and be implementable within realistic timescales. • The UFU agreed to consider whether there are further Shared Island Fund proposals that would be beneficial to the agriculture community. • Minister will consider and agree future plans for the Soil Nutrient Health Scheme.	
ACTION POINTS / OFFICIAL RESPONSIBLE: N/a	
Notes written by - 	Date: 25/6/2026

Signed and Dated by Lead Policy Official: M McKendry 15/9/26

Signed and Dated by Minister/Private Secretary: 16/9/26