



Northern Ireland  
Assembly

---

**COMMITTEE FOR  
AGRICULTURE AND  
RURAL DEVELOPMENT**

---

**OFFICIAL REPORT**  
(Hansard)

---

**Dioxins Inquiry**

10 November 2009

**NORTHERN IRELAND ASSEMBLY**

---

**COMMITTEE FOR AGRICULTURE AND  
RURAL DEVELOPMENT**

---

**Dioxins Inquiry**

---

10 November 2009

**Members present for all or part of the proceedings:**

Mr Ian Paisley Jnr (Chairperson)  
Mr Tom Elliott (Deputy Chairperson)  
Mr Willie Clarke  
Mr Pat Doherty  
Mr William Irwin  
Dr William McCrea  
Mr Patsy McGlone  
Mr Francie Molloy  
Mr George Savage

**The Chairperson (Mr Paisley Jnr):**

The next thing that I want to deal with is the dioxins report. We spent some time going through that line-by-line last week. I draw members' attention to a number of changes that were made. They were agreed on the day. The first of those is at the top of page 9; the next is at the middle of page 11; there are further changes at the top of page 14, bottom of page 15, and on page 16, in reference to the aid package; and there is a small change on page 17.

The most substantive changes are on pages 18, 19 and 20 and relate to the report's conclusions, which we have made more robust. I have read through the changes, as, I am sure, have members. I will give the Committee a couple of minutes to read through them again now. Members may be satisfied, but if anyone wants to say anything about any of the changes, and specifically the conclusions, they are invited to do so.

**Mr Doherty:**

On page 19, in conclusion 28, I remember the first part up to the word “failure”. However, I do not remember:

“proof that the cooperation heralded by the Department”,

blah, blah, blah. Perhaps my memory is at fault, but did we discuss that as well?

**The Committee Clerk:**

I recollect that Mr Elliott raised that issue and asked that it be included.

**The Chairperson:**

Has anyone else anything to say? Are members content with the report and the amendments that we have made to it? I think that the amendments focus the report and give it more teeth. It will ask a question of the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, in particular; if anything comes up in the future that affects our industry, we in Northern Ireland will have a right to receive early warning in order to deal with the matter appropriately.

**Mr Elliott:**

Our thanks should go to the Committee team for their work on the report. Anything that we have asked to be included has been. I formally propose acceptance of the report.

**Mr Irwin:**

I may be wrong, but on page 16, it is stated that:

“the package was limited to only 25% of the direct verifiable costs incurred or 25%”.

I thought that they got more than that.

**The Committee Clerk:**

No, I checked those figures and they are in the Department of Agriculture’s recently published resource accounts.

**Mr Irwin:**

It must be that the EC paid somebody more than 25%.

**The Committee Clerk:**

Yes, but the Committee was talking about the cost to the Northern Ireland block, as opposed to

the overall cost. That was the cost to the Northern Ireland block.

**Mr Irwin:**

OK.

**Dr W McCrea:**

I second the report.

**The Chairperson:**

Are members content?

*Members indicated assent.*

**The Chairperson:**

The report will be printed and I think that we are on schedule for it to be debated —

**The Committee Clerk:**

Well, no, we are not.

**The Chairperson:**

Are we not yet on schedule?

**The Committee Clerk:**

I checked, and we are required to give the Minister, the witnesses and those mentioned in the recommendations eight weeks in which to respond to the report, so the original date in December cannot be met.

**The Chairperson:**

We will kick off the new year with it.

**Mr W Clarke:**

I think that the 25% figure is wrong, as well. The Executive's original offer was 25%, but I think that we got extra resources.

**Mr Elliott:**

As I said at the last meeting, there is an issue around that. The offer was 25%, but more money was found from somewhere. I think that it was 25% compensation or value rate. However, there was other money for the hardship payment, and that payment did not go on the value of the animals or the stock — although I may be wrong about that.

**Mr Irwin:**

Farmers got 75%.

**Mr Elliott:**

They got what was equivalent to 75%. However, I have a notion that that was not classified as 75% of the value of their animals.

**Dr W McCrea:**

For accuracy, I propose that the Committee Clerk check that again. It may be that it was done another way, and 25% is what has to be put down.

**The Chairperson:**

Perhaps a footnote explaining how the calculation was achieved would be helpful.

**Dr W McCrea:**

There could be a European aspect to this.

**The Chairperson:**

Putting in a footnote might be the way round it.

**The Committee Clerk:**

I will check that and contact members to get their agreement.