

SCRUTINY OF THE COMMON FRAMEWORKS IN THE NORTHERN IRELAND ASSEMBLY

COMMITTEE FOR THE EXECUTIVE OFFICE

11 March 2022

Introduction

On 27 January 2022 the Committee for the Executive Office wrote to those statutory committees of the Northern Ireland Assembly which had responsibility for the scrutiny of Common Frameworks asking for their experiences. The table in the Appendix summarises the state of scrutiny of frameworks at the time of writing to the Committees.

Three of the five affected committees responded, encompassing 21 of the 32 frameworks. This paper constitutes a summary of those experiences.

Experiences of the Frameworks

Comments by Committees for their experiences of the common frameworks can be summarised as follows:

- Unclear or ambiguous timelines for publication: This has been problematic for planning scrutiny.
- Lack of consultation on the March 2022 deadline: The requirement that all scrutiny should be complete by the end of the mandate was not discussed with committees. Equivalent Welsh and Scottish committee colleagues have also expressed concerns about meeting this deadline.
- Poor quality of documentation: The documentation received for some frameworks has lacked detail or the information was to be made available elsewhere, making scrutiny difficult.
- Technical language in summaries: Some of the accompanying framework summaries cover very specific areas and use very technical language, which require further explanation.
- Lack of North-South engagement: There is little or no indication that the common frameworks take into account the circumstances of Northern Ireland in relation to the land border and north-south relationships.
- Lack of clarity: Only limited information could be provided in respect of some frameworks when further elucidation was sought from UK Departments, limiting the effectiveness of scrutiny.

APPENDIX: COMMON FRAMEWORKS AT COMMITTEES OF THE NORTHERN IRELAND ASSEMBLY IN JANUARY 2022

Committee	Common Framework	Status/documents received by Committee
AERA	Implementation of EU Emissions Trading System (ETS)	Awaiting provisional framework
AERA	Agricultural support	Awaiting provisional framework
AERA	Agriculture - fertiliser regulations	Awaiting provisional framework
AERA	Agriculture - organic farming	Awaiting provisional framework
AERA	Agriculture - Zootech	Awaiting provisional framework
AERA	Animal health and welfare	Awaiting provisional framework
AERA	Fisheries management & support	Awaiting provisional framework
AERA	Ozone depleting substances and Fgases	Awaiting provisional framework
AERA	Plant Health	Awaiting provisional framework
AERA	Plant varieties and seeds	Awaiting provisional framework
AERA	Resources and Waste	Awaiting provisional framework
AERA	Radioactive substances	Committee scrutiny stage
AERA	Air Quality	Awaiting provisional framework
AERA	Best available Techniques	Awaiting provisional framework
AERA/Economy	Chemicals and Pesticides	Awaiting provisional framework
Economy	Mutual Recognition of professional qualification (MRPQ)	Awaiting provisional framework
Economy	Services Directive	Awaiting provisional framework
Economy	Company law	Committee scrutiny stage
Economy	Specified quantities and packaged goods	Awaiting provisional framework
Economy	Late payment (commercial transactions)	Committee scrutiny stage
Finance	Public procurement	Committee scrutiny stage

Health	Organs, tissues and cells (apart from embryos and gametes)	Committee scrutiny stage
Health	Public health protection and health security	Committee scrutiny stage
Health	Blood Safety and Quality	Committee scrutiny stage
Health	Food Compositional Standards and Labelling	Awaiting provisional framework
Health	Food and feed safety and hygiene law	Committee scrutiny stage
Health	Nutrition Labelling, Composition and Standards	Committee scrutiny stage
Infrastructure	Hazardous substances planning	Implemented
Infrastructure	Commercial Road Transport and Operator licensing	Committee scrutiny stage
Infrastructure	Rail technical standards (interoperability)	Committee scrutiny stage
Infrastructure	Driver licensing	Committee scrutiny stage
Infrastructure	Roads - Motor Insurance	Committee scrutiny stage