

Weeds (Amendment) Bill 2013
Second Reading approved

4.1. Mrs Beecroft to move:

That the Weeds (Amendment) Bill 2013 be read a second time.

The Speaker: We turn to Item 4 on our Order Paper, Bill for Second Reading, which is the Weeds (Amendment) Bill, and I call on the Hon. Member for Douglas South to move. Mrs Beecroft.

Mrs Beecroft: Thank you, Mr Speaker.

This Bill makes a number of amendments to the Weeds Act 1957, intended to introduce clarity in relation to the management and destruction of injurious weeds. In particular, the Bill introduces provisions enabling the Department to produce a code of practice on the management of ragwort, which is a subject close to those who own horses and to farmers.

The code is intended as an educational tool to assist individuals to manage the growth of ragwort on the Isle of Man, rather than eradicate it completely, which is what is expected within the current Act. The current duty imposed within the 1957 Act has been identified as both unachievable and contrary to sound environmental practice.

The changes recognise the fact that injurious weeds do have a role to play in the biodiversity and flora and fauna of the Manx countryside. The amendments will mean that the focus of injurious weed management will be in relation to animal welfare on agricultural land.

Mr Speaker, I move that this Bill be read a second time.

The Speaker: Mrs Cannell.

Mrs Cannell: Thank you, Mr Speaker.

I am happy to second and reserve my remarks.

The Speaker: Hon. Member for Ramsey, Mr Singer.

Mr Singer: Could I ask just on one point that the Hon. Member just said? She said that these injurious weeds do have a part to play in biodiversity: can she possibly explain that a little bit further? If they are injurious, they do not seem to have much of a part to play in our countryside.

The Speaker: Hon. Member, Mr Quirk.

Mr Quirk: Thank you, Mr Speaker.

A similar sort... Regarding organisations, have the Wildlife Trust and organisations been consulted on the matter and do they have any views; and if they are different from the Department's, could they be shared?

The Speaker: I call on the mover to reply, Mrs Beecroft.

Mrs Beecroft: Thank you, Mr Speaker.

I thank Mr Singer for his question about this because it does seem a little bit contrary on the face of it, but the only way that this is injurious is to livestock, and so we do not want to eradicate it completely because it is good for other wildlife.

Mr Singer: That is what I was asking.

Mrs Beecroft: Like bees for pollination etc, the flowers and all the things like that which actually ties up with Mr Quirk's question. It did go out for consultation and there were 17 responses. A draft Cushag Code was prepared and it was produced in October 2012 and it was written in partnership with the Department of Environment, Food and Agriculture, the Department of Infrastructure, the Manx Horse Council, the Manx National Farmers' Union and Wildflowers of Man. So they have all been consulted on it and have been part of the group that has formed this draft Code, which will have to go before Tynwald, obviously, before it is introduced anyway.

The Speaker: And you beg to move?

Mrs Beecroft: Yes, I beg to move.

The Speaker: In that case, I put the question that the Weeds (Amendment) Bill be read for the second time. Those in favour, please say aye; against, no. The ayes have it. The ayes have it.

Hon. Members, that concludes the business of the House today. The House will now stand adjourned until the next sitting, which will take place at 10 o'clock on Monday, 18th March in this Chamber in order to elect four Members of the Legislative Council.