

Angling Consultative Council Ireland (ACCI)

Minutes of Meeting – 28 September 2021 (Remotely)

Attendees:

Philip Nugent (DECC, Co-Chair), Martin McEnroe (ACI, Co-Chair), Bob Seward (SSTRAI), Paul Byrne (IPS), Warren Doyle (EFSA), Noel Carr (FISSTA), Denis Maher (DECC), Karen Egan (DECC), Barry McCartin (DECC), Mary Breslin (DECC, Co-Secretary), Francis O Donnell (IFI), Jonathan Rice (Co-Secretary), Joe Birney (IFSA, Assistant Chair).

Apologies: Donal Kennedy, Pdraig O’Riordan, Suzanne Campion.

Agenda Item 1 - Adoption of Minutes

Meeting opened with welcome to all. Minutes of 24 August 2021 meeting were circulated previously. Amendments and clarifications were accepted and adoption of the minutes proposed and seconded.

Matters arising

1. IPS wished it noted in the minutes the long delays in the final stages of the Pike Review Group and publication of its report. Urgent action is required to progress this.
2. FISSTA wanted it noted that with regards to the draft Bye-law, the legal process was followed and Article 7 was appropriate to the draft Bye-law.

Action Point:

IFI to engage with members of the Pike Review Group and will revert back to ACCI and directly with IPS.

Agenda Item 2 – Theme 2 (Protection) of the Work Programme

ACCI Chair (DECC) opened the discussion on Work Programme Theme 2 “Protection”.

IFSA raised the following points:

- Marine Protected Areas (MPAs) – new laws are needed for MPAs; 6 nautical mile (NM) limit needs to be reinstated. The Court of Appeal refused the Minister for Agriculture, Food and the Marine's application to continue a stay on the ban on trawlers over 18m from fishing inside the 6NM limit. This occurred 23 September 2021. This is viewed as another step backwards.
- Non-Quota Species – Protection and legislation required to monitor and control the current legal exploitation of species such as sprat, sand eel, wrasse and green shore crab. There is a need to implement quotas and restrictions for these species which form an integral part of the marine ecosystem.
- Bottom Trawling – Cease and need to facilitate recovery of the sea bed as it will not recover naturally in some cases.
- Waste Service - Adequate safeguards must be designed and implemented to combat agricultural run off into shallow bays.
- Water Quality – tighten up licensing process.
- Finfish and Salmon Aquaculture – All licences should be reviewed immediately, following Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) and technological advances availed of.
- Organic Status of Farmed Atlantic Salmon – There needs to be independent certification and the overall industry reviewed with inputs from wild fish stakeholders.
- Stakeholder involvement in the Management Process – Learn from raised bog process. There needs to be a results-based system and payment for actual environment/ecology measured results.

It was noted that there were serious issues for coastal communities and anglers. People's livelihoods are seriously under threat. IFI said they were disappointed by the overturned judgement in the Court of Appeal and that the 6 NM limit was from the baseline and there should be no trawling inside it.

DECC was asked what work was being carried out by them in relation to inshore MPAs. Denis Maher (DECC) said that there were very positive meetings with DHLGH attended by Cathal Gallagher and Greg Forde (IFI). It was proposed that a meeting of ACCI and DHLGH should be arranged. DECC advised that a representative from the Department and IFI would be meeting with DHLGH in the first instance.

Action Point:

1. DECC and IFI to liaise with DAFM as regards activity within the 6NM limit and protection of inshore stocks, the impact of aquaculture on wild fish stocks and the licencing system for aquaculture. Licencing systems must ensure effective wild stock protective measures are robust and guarantee the protection of all wild stocks.
2. Following the proposed meeting with DAFM, IFI and DECC to report back to ACCI.

Irish Federation of Pike Angling Clubs (IFPAC) (Protection)

One of IFPACs objectives on protection is the appointment of private water keepers. The appointment of private water keepers under Section 295 of the Fisheries (Consolidation) Act 1959 is a cumbersome process and a question was raised if this can be streamlined as an appointment directly by IFI. DECC said it was looking at modernising and streamlining how water keepers are appointed. There is a legal framework around the appointment of water keepers. Bob Seward offered, as ACI appointed National Vetting Bureau (NVB) liaison person, to provide Garda vetting to potential private water keepers through the Angling Council Ireland and ACCI.

Action Point:

DECC are currently working on the legal framework regarding such appointments. DECC will liaise with ACCI to ensure that recommendations on the appointment of private water keepers are brought forward for consideration in the new draft legislation.

Salmon & Sea Trout Recreational Anglers (SSTRAI) (Protection)

SSTRAI proposed that all items as submitted by them under the draft Work Programme in relation to protection be acted on without delay. In particular SSTRAI request that DECC make recommendations to Government to seriously consider making significant changes to the Salmon Aquaculture Licence application procedure to facilitate the industry to move from open net pens to land based closed containment systems.

Action Point:

Urgent action is now required following recent decisions by the Aquaculture Licence Appeal Board (ALAB) on Shot Head, Bantry Bay. DECC and IFI to follow up on proposed protection measures as discussed and outlined in the Work Programme.

IFI advised that it had sought, with the support of DECC, a Judicial Review of the ALAB decision in this regard. This development was welcomed by members.

Agenda Item 3 - Discussion on adoption of draft ACCI Work Programme

Co-Chair (DECC) discussed the adoption of the ACCI Work Programme. The Work Programme is flexible and new themes can be brought forward as views are progressed.

The adoption of the ACCI Work Programme was proposed, seconded and duly adopted.

Action Point:

ACCI members to prepare for each scheduled Work Programme agenda item in advance of meetings.

Agenda Item 4 - Updates

- **National Inland Fisheries Forum (NIFF)**

IFI are close to announcing a chairperson of NIFF. The make-up of NIFF has been finalised. It is envisaged that the first meeting of NIFF will take place in January 2022.

- **Maritime Area Regulatory Authority (MARA)**

Additional function of MARA to be decided by ACCI and needs to fill any gaps.

- **Wild Salmon & Sea Trout Tagging Scheme Regulations (WS&STTSRs)**

DECC and IFI are awaiting the scientific advice of the Technical Expert Group on Salmon (TEGOS) which will feed into IFI's management advice towards preparation of the WS&STTSR's 2021 in respect of the 2022 season. It is anticipated that the public consultation will open in November 2021.

- **Fisheries Bye-law Programme**

There are approximately 10 bye-laws in the fisheries bye-law programme. The bye-laws will be progressed in pairs and will be acted on as soon as practicable. The priority is the WS&STTR's Statutory Instrument and attendant bye- laws.

Action Point:

1. ACCI to be updated re further developments on NIFF, MARA, WS&STTSRs and Fisheries Bye-law Programme.
2. ACI and FISSTA commended and thanked IFI for their efforts in fishery patrols and protection in 2021. Co-Chair said that the work being carried out was noted and well received within the angling community.

Agenda Item 5 – AOB

IPS asked how effective the River Basin Management Plan (RBMP) was in trying to get the environment issues to the angling community.

Martin McEnroe as National Water Forum (NWF) board member attended the launch of the RBMP. The Plan covers everything from nitrates, phosphates, invasive species and mariculture etc. ACI Co-Chair said the door is open to make submissions to the NWF. DECC Co-Chair advised that it would be important to have a collaborative approach.

Action Point:

The ACCI to put forward a submission paper. This paper will collectively broaden the argument that all the action points in the RBMP were not only about fishing but also about the eco system.

Date of next ACCI meeting (Remotely) Tuesday 19th October 2021 - 16:30.

All those in attendance were thanked by Co-Chairs.